44740

Fall 1978

ConVoc.

Natio[illegible]rary of Canada
Canadian Theses Division
Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Division des thèses canadiennes

PERMISSION TO MICROFILM — AUTORISATION DE MICROFILMER

- Please print or type — Écrire en lettres moulées ou dactylographier

Full Name of Author — Nom complet de l'auteur

GRECKOL, Sonja Ruth

Date of Birth — Date de naissance

Feb. 1, 1946

Country of Birth — Lieu de naissance

CANADA

Permanent Address — Résidence fixe

20 Ross St
Toronto, Ont.

Title of Thesis — Titre de la thèse

A Developmental Study of Children's Jokes: Descriptive & Structural Approaches

University — Université

U. of A.

Degree for which thesis was presented — Grade pour lequel cette thèse fut présentée

Ph.D.

Year this degree conferred — Année d'obtention de ce grade

1978

Name of Supervisor — Nom du directeur de thèse

Dr. J. Chambers

Permission is hereby granted to the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

L'autorisation est, par la présente, accordée à la BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DU CANADA de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans l'autorisation écrite de l'auteur.

Date

April 7, 1980

Signature

Sonja Greckol

NL-91 (4/77)

National Library of Canada
Collections Development Branch

Canadian Theses on
Microfiche Service

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Direction du développement des collections

Service des thèses canadiennes
sur microfiche

NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us a poor photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

THIS DISSERTATION
HAS BEEN MICROFILMED
EXACTLY AS RECEIVED

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de mauvaise qualité.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE
NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

NL-339 (Rev. 8/80)

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A DEVELOPMENTAL STUDY OF CHILDREN'S JOKES: DESCRIPTIVE AND STRUCTURAL APPROACHES

BY

© SONJA RUTH GRECKOL

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
AUGUST, 1978

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A DEVELOPMENTAL STUDY OF CHILDREN'S JOKES: DESCRIPTIVE AND STRUCTURAL APPROACHES

BY

© SONJA RUTH GRECKOL

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN
DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
AUGUST, 1978

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance a thesis entitled "A Developmental Study of Children's Jokes: Descriptive and Structural Approaches," submitted by Sonja Ruth Greckol in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Developmental Psychology.

Juanita Chambers
Supervisor

W. H. O. Schmidt

S. D. Clandfield

Gerald C. Cupchik
External Examiner

Date Sept 19 1978.

ABSTRACT

In an attempt to characterize jokes and riddles told by children and the perceptions of the surrounding world which these reveal, descriptive and structural models for the analysis of the mutual understandings of the everyday world which are necessary to the sharing of jokes are elaborated. The collection of jokes and riddles was obtained from 5, 9, and 13 year old children who were simply asked to exchange and tape record their favorite jokes and funny stories, out of the hearing of adults.

The descriptive categories--context, quality, themes and structural type--which appeared to be adequate to the characterization of regularly recurring features, followed from the question: What features are necessary to each joke in the same way. A classification of riddles and jokes by age and a comparison between ages which reveals increasing complexity in the necessary understandings of older children is elaborated.

In attempting to answer the second question--What do the jokes tell us about the world lived by the children--it became apparent that another question is prior: How do the jokes tell us about this world? A structural model which appears to be adequate to the complexity of the cultural relations embedded in these jokes is developed on the basis of a selected number of sexual jokes. This model specifies a context from which the joke follows to a logical but unexpected conclusion. This unexpected conclusion which replaces the one which might have been inferred is determined by certain features of the context being made explicit by this stated conclusion. It is argued that those features of context which have been made explicit by the stated conclusion are the features which are disordered and consequently questionable suppositions about the world. Those features which remain implicit remain ordered and consequently unquestioned understandings of the world.

Conceptual and methodological problems which are specific to the investigation of humor are discussed in relation to broader conceptual and methodological problems in psychological studies. Some implications for the approaches necessary to the investigation of complex developmental cultural phenomena are also elaborated.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. INTRODUCTION 1

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE 10

  Overview of Philosophical and Psychological Theories 10

  Experimental Investigations of Children's Humor 14

III. REVIEW OF FURTHER RELATED LITERATURE 35

  Psychoanalytic Studies of Children's Humor. 35

  Shared Dimensions of Humor. 46

IV. THE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY 54

  The Method. 54

    The Rationale 54

    The Sample 56

    The Procedure 57

  The Data. 58

    The Rationale 58

    The Definitions and Descriptive Categories 58

  The Classification of Riddles and Jokes by Age 66

    Riddles Told by Five Year Olds 66

CHAPTER PAGE

Riddles Told by Nine Year Olds 69

Riddles Told by 13 Year Olds 72

Comparison of Riddles between Ages . . 73

Jokes Told by 13 Year Olds 74

Jokes Told by Nine Year Olds 77

Comparison of Jokes between Ages . . . 78

Limitations of the Descriptive Model . . 78

V. THE STRUCTURAL STUDY 82

The Structural Analysis 87

VI. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS 119

REFERENCES 125

TABLES

TABLE PAGE

I Riddles told by five year olds distinguished by pattern and type 67

II Riddles told by 9 year olds distinguished by pattern and type 70

III Patterns of riddles at each age level 73

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This study of children's joking is guided by two central questions: What characterizes children's joking? and What does this joking tell us about the world lived by the children? The larger question from which these questions follow is one of how the child, and later the adult, continues to develop an active and critical assessment of the personal, social and cultural surround from which progressively greater detachment is necessary for greater participation (Schachtel, 1959; Schmidt, 1978). Though this question can be approached from a number of perspectives, it is essentially a question of the development of a self-conscious relation to the world. The selection of joking as the content of this investigation is based on the proposition that a sense of humor, the ability to joke about oneself and about that which one perceives, facilitates this self-conscious development.

This proposition follows from an understanding of human functioning derived from the work of Merleau-Ponty (1963), who argues that the essential definition of humanness is "not the capacity to create a second nature", but rather "the capacity of going beyond created structures in order to create others (p.175)." The human capacity to organize perceptions, to synthesize and to symbolize centrally includes the capacity to re-organize, re-synthesize and to re-create symbolic relations. It would appear that making or recognizing a joke requires precisely this ability to recognize order, disorder, and alternate possibilities: an ability to recognize oneself and the surround from different perspectives. Related conceptions of humor and joking have been developed by various investigators. Sully (1907) suggested, "Comedy is necessary to slacken the ties that bind us to society (p.14)." Zijderveld (1968) argues that some forms of joking function in the "revitalization of our taken-for-granted world (p.287)." Though these dimensions of humor and joking have not been examined specifically in the developmental literature, the ability to assume multiple perspectives has been explored, ~~i.e.~~ e.g. by Piaget (1952), G.H. Mead (1956), Kohlberg (1969) and others, and clearly changes developmentally. Helmers, cited in McGhee (1971c) suggests that the child's early word play is an exploration in disorder and re-creation of order.

The human dialectic, according to Merleau-Ponty, "the capacity of orienting oneself in relation to the possible, to the mediate, and not in relation to a limited mileu. . . is ambiguous: it is first manifested by the social or cultural structures, the appearance of which it brings about and in which it imprisons itself (p.176)." It is in precisely these terms which that jokes, like myths, must be understood to speak the teller (Levi-Strauss, 1966). The products of human work--the structuring of perceptions--are at one and the same time encapsulating and liberating. It will be argued that the joke both slackens and binds the recognition of self and world as givens rather than creations. And further, that an analysis of the structure of jokes is initially necessary in order to understand this relation.

Though an increasing interest in the investigation of humor itself has been shown in recent years (Zigler, 1966, 1967; McGhee, 1971, 1974; Shultz, 1972, 1973, 1974), these investigations have generally addressed themselves to the cognitive bases of comprehension and appreciation of humor stimuli. In one of the only studies of social interactional components of the humor response, Chapman (1975) explores the impact of sharing a joke on children's laughter and smiling, and on their ratings of the humor stimuli. He notes in summary, however, that there is no established psychological concept which is equivalent to the lay expression of "sharing a joke" and postulates a psychophysiological explanation of laughter wherein humor is conceived as "a trigger for the release of socially induced arousal (p.49)."

A small number of studies have explored developmental aspects of the correlates of humor. Getzels and Jackson (1962) point out the relative predominance of humorous material in the autobiographical material of their highly creative children. Hauck and Thomas (1972) find that humorous associations facilitate incidental learning. They also find a high correlation between creativity and self-generated humor. Leiberman (1965) finds a sense of humor one of five factors contributing to a larger factor identified as playfulness among five year olds. This playfulness factor is significantly related to divergent thinking. In these representative studies, humor itself is not the focus of investigation but is found significant in the exploration of creativity and learning.

When one considers the range of this literature, a developmental descriptive study seems an obvious starting point since systematic treatment of this nature is largely unavailable. Groch (1974), studying joking and humor among preschoolers, suggests: "1) that the description or taxonomic study of humor logically precedes experimentation; 2) that a structural model relating underlying dimensions should be established; and 3) that an important aspect of the child's joking and humor is derived from social interaction (p.1098)."

In planning this study, the author was confronted by a number of problems stemming from having made a similar assessment of the appropriate beginning. First, humor does not survive well under experimental scrutiny; its spontaneity seems to be one of its defining characteristics. Second, though theories of humor and laughter abound, and most of us can recognize and recall humorous experiences, the experimental models for understanding and exploring this experience are inadequate. Third, the author wished to make observations, to glimpse an activity from which adults are normally excluded.

While these problems are unique to the investigation of humor, they stem from larger conceptual controversies within psychology. Sigmund Koch, in one of his commentaries on the state of psychology, contends that "From the beginning...some pooled schematic image of the form of science was dominant; respectability held more glamor than insight, caution than curiosity, feasibility than fidelity (p.486)." Giorgi (1970), in his assertion that "there was a devisiveness in psychology right away; a psychologist had to opt either for fidelity to the phenomena or for fidelity to science (p.90)," also locates the difficulties one encounters in posing certain relevant questions in the rigorous and full-scale application of an approach and a methodology stemming from natural science which seemingly legitimates only quantitative propositions under experimental conditions. It becomes apparent that psychological approaches to the study of humor have been limited in practise to those variables which are most readily operationalized and quantifiable. This is perhaps necessary but it must be acknowledged that less readily manageable variables may have greater descriptive and/or explanatory potential.

There is, however, a further dimension to be considered. In the previously cited Chapman (1975) study of social dimensions of humor appreciation, various conceptions of the lay understanding of "to share a joke" are considered. Among those considered and rejected on the grounds that "laughter is not a behavior which is normally inhibited (p.47)," is the term "de-individuation". The very term conveys a conception of mutual understanding as a loss of individuality. That a conception of sharing as a loss is rejected on the grounds that the activity is not normally inhibited strikes one as a highly ideological conception rooted in notions of human relatedness as loss. Might one conceivably entertain the possibility that "de-individuation" is an appropriate term for the mutual ability to understand the words and sentences on this page, but reject it because the ability to understand a common language is not normally inhibited?

Given this conceptual bias, and the difficulties encountered in examining humor in conjunction with these natural science requirements, it appears not to be accidental that much relevant data is unavailable and that certain inquiries are not made. Therefore, in addition to attempting to investigate children's joking, the author is necessarily attempting to develop a framework within which attention to some of these larger considerations might clarify some of the problems specific to the investigation of humor.

The guidelines advanced by Giorgi (1970) were employed in attempting to answer the initial question posed in this study. The research situation is understood as a "place where the engaged projects of two different attitudes intersect (Giorgi, 1970, p.190)." Centrally, it is recognized that the researcher and the subjects necessarily conceptualize the event--the research situation--in different ways. The data with which one works, as a result, is a product of this interface. Following from this conceptualization, children were simply asked to exchange their favorite jokes and funny stories. These must be understood as only one form of humor and were not further defined on the assumption that the children would exchange what they understood to be jokes. The variations in the children's understandings of what a joke may be is necessary data. In asking the children to exchange these jokes and funny stories, the variations from those productions which the researcher or any adult might not recognize or consider appropriate jokes are significant and merit examination. These variations cannot be discarded as error variance. Then, having collected the jokes and funny stories, the task was the development of a set of descriptive categories which adequately described the material collected. The rigor of the method is determined by the tension between the categories developed and their adequacy in describing the phenomena (Giorgi, 1976). These descriptive categories were based on the examination of the understandings which children must share in order to understand the jokes and funny stories exchanged. That is, the recognizeable jokes and riddles were isolated and examined in order to ascertain the commonality of understandings which children assume between themselves. The relations between shared understandings which are joke and riddle specific must be identified and elaborated concurrently.

The canned joke under scrutiny here is not an independent individual production. The source of a given joke is very difficult to determine. In this respect, jokes bear certain similarities to nursery rhymes, folktales and perhaps even myths. These are cultural forms with which one gradually acquires familiarity and competence and which necessarily reflect the internalization of cultural and social structures as well as individual cognitive capacity and emotional development (Church, 1961; Schmidt, 1973). One must recognize that: "Consciousness is a network of significative intentions which are sometimes clear to themselves and sometimes, on the contrary, lived rather than known (Merleau-Ponty, 1963, p.174).

The second question posed at the outset of this study in actuality embodies a prior question which is how do these jokes tell us about the world lived by the children, and necessitates an examination of the relation between joking and social structures. Whereas the psychological study of joking has focused on individual features--on the cognitive and affective dynamics of the individual--it is contended here that these can be abstracted from a particular cultural milieu for independent scrutiny only if the complexity of joking within that cultural-historical milieu is recognized. Though it might be argued that the jokes themselves as told by the children are not an appropriate object of psychological research, it can also be argued that a continued accumulation of results from experimental studies which of necessity ignore the complexity of the individual-cultural relation in the service of ascertaining the individual psychological structures necessarily cannot ~~yild~~ yield insights into the complexity of the phenomenona. The goal of a study such as this is the development of a structural model which might provide another dimension to current humor research.

In the second chapter, philosophical and psychological theories of humor and joking are briefly surveyed. The experimental literature on children's humor is surveyed in the second section of this chapter.

In the third chapter, the psychoanalytic contributions to the study of joking are examined in the first section. In a second section of this chapter, selected studies of the social dimensions of joking are considered, and implications of these for the study of children's humor are drawn.

In the fourth chapter, the approach, the procedures for collecting the data, and the development of the descriptive categories are presented. In a second section of this chapter, the application of the descriptive categories to the collected jokes is detailed. A final section elaborates the limitations of this descriptive approach.

In the fifth chapter, a structural model, and the consequent analysis, is presented for selected jokes.

The study is summarized, and implications for psychological studies are discussed, in the concluding chapter.

LEAF 9 OMITTED IN PAGE NUMBERING.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of selected literature will first present a brief overview of philosophical and psychological theories of humor. The philosophical theories include superiority, relief, and conflict theories; the psychological theories include gestalt, arousal and psychoanalytic theories. Since testing the adequacy of any given theory is not the objective of this study, these positions are simply summarized in order to provide background information. The second section of this review will deal critically with the experimental literature on children's humor.

OVERVIEW OF PHILOSOPHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

Superiority theories trace back to Plato but generally stem from Hobbes (1651, cited in Piddington, 1932; Flugel, 1954) who attributed laughter to "a sudden glory arising from some conception of some eminency in ourselves; by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly." Bain (1880, cited in Piddington, 1932) modified Hobbes's original formulation and stated: "The occasion of the ludicrous is the degradation of some person or interest possessing dignity, in circumstances that excite no other emotion." A further modification of this position is advanced by Bergson (1924) for whom laughter arose from the perception of "something mechanical encrusted on the living (p. 37)." Rapp (1949, 1951) traces all forms of wit and humor back to physical victory and defeat in personal contests. In addition to feelings of superiority, these theorists recognize two other factors which contribute to the laughter: suddenness of onset and absence of interfering emotions.

Conflict theory originated with Beattie (1776, cited in Berlyne, 1969) who wrote:

> Laughter arises from the view of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in one complex object or assemblage, or as acquiring a sort of mutual relation from the particular manner in which the mind takes note of them.

Variations on this basic statement have come from Kant and Schopenhauer who are cited by Berlyne. Later formulations of conflict theory include those of Greig and Menon (also cited in Piddington, 1933) and from Koestler (1964).

Relief theory seems to have been originally formulated by Descartes (1649, cited in Berlyne, 1969) who "held laughter to result from the joy that comes when we have been indignant at some evil and realize that we cannot be harmed by it (p. 802)." Berlyne cited McDougal and Gregory as having contributed variations of relief theory. Sully (1907) attributes laughter to relief from strain or to sudden feelings of playfulness.

Psychological theories of humor have been primarily gestalt, arousal and psychoanalytic theories. Since psychoanalytic theory has been the most influential, and is necessary background to the study of children's humor, it will be dealt with in the second section of this review. The Gestalt position on humor was originally formulated by Maier (1932):

> The thought-configuration which makes for a humorous experience must 1) be unprepared for; 2) appear suddenly and bring with it a change in meaning of its elements; 3) be made up of elements which are experienced entirely objectively (no emotional factors can be part of the configuration); 4) contain as its elements the facts appearing in the story, and these facts must be harmonized, explained, and unified; and have the characteristics of the ridiculous in that its harmony and logic apply only to its own elements (1932, p. 71-72).

Fry (1963) views the resolution of unexpected paradox as the basis of the humor experience. Bateson (1969), in his formulation of humor, stresses that:

> the messages in the first phase of telling the joke are such that while the informational content is, so to speak, on the surface, the other content types in various forms are implicit in the background. When the point of a joke is reached, suddenly this background material is brought to the attention and a paradox, or something like it, is touched off (p. 162).

Koestler (1964), who claims no gestalt base, builds a theory of humor on the process of "bisociation", which consists of "the perceiving of a situation or idea.... in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference (p. 35)." The bisociative process is the basic pattern of creative ability which "can enter the service of humor, discovery, or art (p. 27)."

> The pattern underlying all varieties of humor is bisociative... This causes an abrupt transfer of the train of thought from one matrix to another governed by a different logic or "rule of the game". But certain emotions, owing to their greater inertia and persistence cannot follow such nimble jumps of thought; discarded by reason, they are worked off along channels of least resistance in laughter (p. 69-70).

These emotions are of the self-assertive, aggressive-defensive rather than the self-transcending, participatory type.

The third group of psychological theories of humor comes from the arousal theorists. Berlyne (1969) asserts that: "Humorous situations always contain factors that can be expected to raise arousal and other factors that can be expected to lower arousal or to keep it within moderate bounds (p. 806)." Raising of arousal within certain limits is pleasurable and rewarding. He also points out that "virtually all of the factors that govern arousal can play a part in humor (p. 806)." This is in contrast to most theorists, who hold that there are only one or two critical prerequisites for humor.

Tomkins (1962) takes a similar position. He holds that laughter and smiling are activated by a relatively steep reduction of the density of stimulation and neural firing. Laughter is a more intense form of the same response as is smiling: "The general density of stimulation which is suddenly reduced begins at a higher level in the case of laughter compared with the smile (1962, p. 370.)"

EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS OF CHILDREN'S HUMOR

The experimental investigations of humor which will be reviewed here are of three types. The first group is an older series of investigations in which the experimenters were attempting to delineate the various types of stimuli which children find funny. The second series of studies focuses on the cognitive dimensions of humor appreciation and comprehension. The testing of a theory of humor appreciation is the intent of the final series reviewed here.

An older series of investigations which did not follow from specific theoretical orientations pre-dates the current experimental study of children's humor preferences. Kenderdine (1931), making observations in a nursery school setting, found that children laughed most frequently in situations involving bodily movement. Situations which involved socially unacceptable features and actual humorous situations produced less laughter. In her observations, children of higher intelligence laughed more than did those of lower intelligence. Her having concluded that the presence of others is essential to the occurrence of laughter may have been unwarranted but understandable, since her observations were made in a social setting. [illegible]ng and Jersild (1932), observing in a nursery setting, also report the occurrence of laughter along with bodily movement.

Justin (1932) investigated humor preferences of nursery school children ranging from 3 to 6 years of age. Six types of stimuli based on prior definitions of the nature of and prerequisites for laughter were presented to individual children and ranked according to the amount of laughter they evoked. Though no attempt was made to equate the funniness of the stimuli, a prior presentation to another group of children ensured the stimuli being appropriate to the age range. The categoris ranked in order of effectiveness in eliciting laughter were: 1) social smile; 2) surprise; 3) incongruity; 4) play; 5) superiority-degradation; 6) relief from strain. At all age levels, participatory situations provoked more laughter than did verbal stimuli, which provoked more laughter than did pictures. Across all stimulus categories, laughter in response to the stiumli increased between ages 3 and 5 and decreased in the sixth year. Justin found no sex differences in response but children from homes of higher occupational groupings were more responsive. She found a low but positive correlation between intelligence and responsiveness which decreased with age. Since intelligence correlated highest with incongruity stimuli, one might suspect that there is a minimum level required for the appreciation of laughter-provoking stimuli but that beyond that level differences in intelligence are not significant. Justin points out that the precise aspect of the stimuli which provoked the laughter is unknown. She suggests that "the enlargement of the field of laughter-provoking stimuli is seemingly an outcome of the whole process of mental growth (p. 131)." This supports Sully's observation:

> . within the first three years of life all the main directions of mirth of adults are foreshadowed. Humor, itself, which is supposed to come with maturity of feeling and reflection, begins to announce itself in a modest way during this period (p. 216).

Wells (1934) studied the tastes in humorous literature among junior and senior high school students. Pupils in all grades ranked their preferences as follows: 1) slapstick; 2) absurdity; 3) satire; 4) whimsy. Children from homes of higher socio-economic status, particularly the older students, tended to show greater preference for satire and whimsy. No significant relationship between mental ability, social adjustment and humor preferences was found.

Williams (1946) measured humor appreciation by correlating individual children's ranking of cartoons with a standard order established on an adult population. Children with high appreciation scores were more extraverted, more intelligent, and more emotional. The relationship between intelligence and appreciation scores might well be a reflection of the method; it is not unreasonable to expect that more intelligent children might show appreciation patterns which are more similar to those of adults. A small but significant difference in appreciation between boys and girls was found, with boys showing greater range and variability in preference.

A more recent series of studies concentrating on the cognitive dimensions of children's humor responses will now be reviewed.

While trying to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the functioning of retarded children, Zigler _et al_. (1966a) compared the cartoon responses of institutionalized and non-institutionalized retarded children with those of normal children who were approximately matched in mental age. The normal children showed comprehension which was superior to either retarded group, between which there was no difference. Normal children were more expressive, according to a facial mirth score, than were either group of retarded children. While institutionalized retarded children were more expressive than were the non-institutionalized, they were also more inappropriate, since their mean mirth response score for non-comprehended cartoons was greater than for the comprehended cartoons. Since the retarded children were found to have as much difficulty with relatively undemanding cartoons as they did with more difficult ones, and because when matched with normals in mental age the retarded children had more difficulty, the authors conclude that some general or specific factor which inheres in retardation precluded normal development of the humor response.

Zigler _et al_. (1966b) constructed a Children's Mirth Response Test (modelled on the Mirth Response Test of Redlich, Levine and Schler, 1951) which consisted of 25 cartoons discriminating comprehension in children from grades 2 to 5 and satisfied the following criteria: 1)appropriate for ages 7 to 15; 2) required little reading skill; 3) represented a wide range of psychological content areas. The response to these cartoons was recorded along three dimensions: 1) funniness (+/-); 2) facial mirth score (0-4); 3) comprehension score (0-2). Children of average ability (n=64) in grades 2 to 5 were tested. The findings indicate a positive relationship between comprehension and cognitive level (CA) but the relationship between comprehension and appreciation as measured by the test is less clearcut. While comprehension increases linearly across age, appreciation increases from grades 2 to 4 and drops off sharply at the 5th grade level. The authors advance a cognitive congruence hypothesis which "would generate the prediction that cartoons which make few cognitive demands elicit a lower mirth response than those that are in keeping with the complexity of the child's cognitive apparatus (1966b, p. 514)." The cartoons, they suggest, are not sufficiently demanding of fifth graders to produce a high mirth response.

Zigler et al. (1967) attempted to test this hypothesis employing cartoons graded in difficulty level with children in grades 3, 5 and 7. In addition to the measures obtained in the previous study, the children ranked the cartoons according to preference. They found a singular difficulty-level effect. The mirth response peaked at the moderately difficult level and dropped off at the two higher levels. This pattern was highly significant and accounted for most of the variance associated with the difficulty level main effect. Mean mirth response to moderately difficult cartoons was significantly higher than were the means for other difficulty levels.

The authors suggest that "It is at the point where comprehending the joke taxes the individual's cognitive structures that the humor response is maximal (1967, p. 335)," and that this is in keeping with White's (1959) effectance motive: "gratification of the effectance motive occurs when the child uses his cognitive ability to his fullest potential, and that laughter was the emotional expression of this gratification in the same way that satiety would accompany the gratification of hunger (1967, p. 335)." They also suggest, however, that a motivation-free information processing model might explain the results. The individual prefers those stimuli which are in keeping with his cognitive capactiy. Using this model, there is no need to postulate a motive for mastery which is necessary to the effectance motivation framework.

Krietler and Krietler (1970) investigated the cognitive aspects of humor appreciation using an approach considerably different from that of Zigler _et al_. (1966, 1967). They tried to determine the cognitive strategies which accompany laughter at absurdity cartoons using 5 and 6 year old subjects. The children, when asked to explain what was funny in the cartoons, gave responses which could be classified with 98% agreement between two independent judges into nine distinct categories:

description by enumerating various items in the situation:

1) without pointing out the theme or absurdity;
2) without pointing out the theme or absurdity followed by criticism which is clearly irrelevant to the presented absurdity;
3) statement of the main theme without any further comment related to its absurdity;

pointing out the absurdity in the depicted situation:

4) and expressing criticism directed at it;
5) and expressing wonder at it;
6) and expressing mockery toward the main figure of the cartoon or the cartoonist;
7) and resolving it on the level of reality, mostly by embedding the depicted situation in a chain of events or a story so that it becomes plausible;
8) explaining it away by transferring it to a level of fiction or fantasy;
9) cancelling it by denial or change of reality (1970, p. 166-70).

Kreitler and Kreitler hypothesized that only certain cognitive strategies would facilitate laughter while others would be nonfacilitatory and others inhibitory. A X^2 analysis of the relation between cognitive strategies and amount of laughter and smiling shows highly significant differences between expected and observed frequencies. Laughter and smiling occurred significantly more often than would be expected on the basis of frequency of verbal response alone in categories 4, 5 and 6. Category one appears to inhibit laughter and smiling while the other categories seem to neither inhibit nor facilitate it. According to the authors, the strategies which facilitate laughter at the absurd are characterized by two features: the first, that the absurd be identified as absurd; and secondly, that no active attempt be made to resolve the absurdity on any level of fantasy or reality. Both of these features are present only in categories 4, 5 and 6. They suggest that "the essence of these strategies (facilitatory) consists in a carefully balanced detachment from the perceived content. The detachment is balanced in the sense that it is not dominant enough to lead to overlooking or misunderstanding the main theme or the situation, but it is sufficient to prevent the perceiver from plunging into remedial action (1970, p. 172-3)." This finding may elaborate the initial findings of Zigler et al. (1966, 1967) in that it elaborates the form comprehension must take in order for it to facilitate laughter. However, because the ages of the children were different, this suggestion is necessarily very tentative. A study employing a method similar to Kreitler and Kreitler's but extended upward in age is necessary in order to determine whether these strategies continue to be facilitative for older children. This study lends some support to Wolfenstein's (1953) observations of children gradually becoming able to distinguish joking from non-joking frames of reference and recognizing that the parameters of the two frames are different.

McGhee (1971a) points out that Zigler et al. attempt to understand the relationship between comprehension and appreciation of humor stimuli according to a cognitive congruency model without determining which cognitive resources are relevant to the age differences in comprehension and appreciation. In attempting to specify these resources, McGhee (1971a, 1971b) employs a Piagetian framework. In the first study (1971a), he hypothesized that operational thinking (Piaget, 1955a) is necessary for comprehension of incongruity humor in which expectancy violations occur at an abstract, conceptual level; whereas it is unnecessary for novelty humor in which the violations occur on a concrete, physical level. It was further hypothesized that 7 year old children would provide the critical test of his initial hypothesis because they are most in transition between pre-operational and concrete operational thought.

Humor comprehension scores based on the children's ability to perceive and remove violations in the humor stimuli, a measure of cognitive level based on successful completion of four Piagetian tasks (two conservation, a class inclusion, and a lateral discrimination task), and a humor appreciation score based on the child's rating the stimuli on a 1-5 funniness scale were obtained from boys who were 5, 7 and 9 years of age (n=30, N=90).

As predicted, the 5 year olds were successful at removing novelty humor and unsuccessful at removing incongruity humor regardless of cognitive level. The 9 year olds were successful at the removal of both types of humor. The 7 year olds with high cognitive scores were able to remove both types, while those with low cognitive scores were only able to remove violations in novelty humor. The relationship between cognitive level and ability to give interpretive rather than descriptive explanations of the stimuli reached significance only at the 7 year old level and only for incongruity humor. A high cognitive score was associated with interpretive explanations. The 5 year olds gave descriptive explanations and the 9 year olds gave interpretive explanations. The relationship between appreciation and type of explanation is not reported. This information could have extended the work of Kreitler and Kreitler (1970) to higher age levels. No significant relationships were found between humor appreciation and cognitive development.

McGhee concludes that measures of cognitive level are more explanatory of humor comprehension than are either intelligence or chronological age. He suggests that his findings do not support those of Zigler et al. (1966, 1967) because the humor stimuli are not comparable since the Zigler studies employed tendentious humor[1] stimuli (Freud, 1905) which may draw on more diverse aspects of functioning. Furthermore, Zigler et al. judged appreciation on the basis of a behavioral measure rather than on subjects' ratings of humor. It is possible, however, that even though determining the cognitive level by testing acquisition of operational thought allows a more detailed explanation of the comprehension of humor, this dimension is of little relevance to appreciation of humor and that this investigation has only shown a relationship between two measures of cognitive development--acquisition of operational thought and comprehension of humor stimuli--without isolating any critical antecedent of humor appreciation.

McGhee (1971b) also attempted to investigate the role of cognitive development in the comprehension and appreciation of tendential humor stimuli. Using the same children, three types of cartoon stimuli which sampled such need-related areas as hostility, superiority, and dependency were employed: one requiring sequential arrangement, the second requiring selection of a missing element, and the third requiring the selection of an appropriate caption. In each set of stimuli, only the correct response produced a humorous situation (as recognized by the author). Measures of cognitive development, appreciation, and comprehension similar to those obtained in the previous study were obtained.

---

[1] Tendential joking serves purposes of aggression, satire, defense or exporsure. The differences between innocent and tendentious joking are elaborated on pp. 35-6.

Similarly it was hypothesized that the 7 year old children would provide the critical test for the same reasons. As predicted, a significant relationship was found between level of acquisition of operational thought and comprehension of the sequential arrangement task among 7 year olds. Though not predicted, this relationship also occurred among 7 year olds on the cartoon-completion task and among 9 year olds on the caption-matching task. Though the cognitive demands of the stimulus material used in the two studies seemed superficially similar, the data indicates otherwise. McGhee explains his results in terms of higher cognitive demand of the stimuli in the present study. However, he seems to have confounded at least two factors: the need-related dimension of the stimuli and the difficulty level of the tasks. Comprehension of a cartoon and manipulation of elements of a cartoon may require different cognitive resources. Likewise, resources adequate to the comprehension of need-related and more purely cognitive (innocent) humor may differ. These variables require independent investigation before the results of this study can be fully explained. Also, the criticisms elaborated in relation to the nonrelationship between humor appreciation and comprehension in the previous study are equally applicable to the similar finding in this study.

McGhee (1974) has conducted one of the only experimental investigations of children's ability to generate a joke. Using riddles with alternate answers which were serious and joking, he demonstrated that children only gradually acquire the ability to discriminate between these:

> For absurdity riddles, a sharp increase in discrimination occurred between grades 1 (males 25%, females 19%) and 2 (males 80%, females 70%) but increased only slightly thereafter (to about 90%). For wordplay riddles, both sexes moved in a linear fashion from chance selection at grade 1 to nearly 100% selection of the joking version by grade 6 (p. 556).

The example of an absurdity provided by McGhee is:

> Why did the elephant lie across the sidewalk?
>
> 1. Humorous answer: To trip the ants.
> 2. Serious answer: He wanted to rest.

According to other classifications of riddles, both of the alternatives produce riddles. The "serious answer" as defined by McGhee is very similar to the type of riddle defined by Opie and Opie (1959) as "catch riddles" and by Sutton-Smith (1973) as "riddle parodies". Both suggest that these can only be identified definitively as riddles when one knows their context and/or is thoroughly familiar with riddling. Thus, McGhee's results may only be indicative of experience with riddling, rather than of the development of concrete operational thought as he suggests.

In addition to investigating the development of this discriminative ability, McGhee was also interested in determining whether or not children were able to recognize and create a joking relationship before they were able to articulate a generalization of its prerequisites. It is this author's view that McGhee was posing a self-evident question equivalent to asking whether or not a child can understand and speak a language before being able to articulate the grammatical rules of that language. Not surprisingly, he found that the ability to generalize developed later.

The last series of investigations that will be considered here are those conducted by Shultz (1972, 1974a, 1974b), who was one of Zigler's students. These investigations of children's appreciation and comprehension were undertaken from a broader theoretical perspective on humor. Shultz (1972) advances a two-stage model of humor which locates the experience of funniness in the perception of a resolvable incongruity. The initial studies employed cartoons with alternate forms which were defined as resolution-removed and incongruity-removed, and attempted to demonstrate the humor-arousing aspects of resolution and incongruity. An example of an original cartoon and the two altered forms is provided in the report (p. 458). In the original, an angry little girl carrying an empty milk bucket is shown walking away from a cow wearing an out-of-order sign. The cow and the out-of-order sign are defined as the two elements of the criterial incongruity. In the incongruity-removed form, the out-of-order sign has been omitted while the rest of the cartoon remains unaltered. In the resolution-removed form, the little girl has been removed leaving only the cow wearing the out-of-order sign. According to Shultz, the presence of the little girl is necessary insofar as it indicates that it is appropriate for a cow that fails to give milk to wear an out-of-order sign. Whether this particular alteration is one of resolution-removal or of incongruity-reduction is certainly questionable. Omitting the little girl could be seen as an alteration which raises the level of abstraction at which the incongruity occurs.

In the first experiment reported, boys of 7 and 12 years were presented original and incongruity-removed forms of different cartoons. During three presentations of the stimuli a funniness rating, a spontaneous mirth score (Zigler et al., 1966), and a rank ordering according to funniness were obtained along with comprehension data which were later scored for identification of criterial and non-criterial incongruities. Three theoretical propositions were supported by the analysis of the data:

> a) there is a tendency for the child to identify one incongruity and one resolution for each cartoon; b) the resolution given is appropriate to the incongruity; and c) incongruities are processed before resolutions (p. 462).

The analysis of the appreciation measures indicates that second graders rated the cartoons as funnier generally and that both grades (2 and 7) rated original cartoons as funnier than the resolution-removed forms. Correlations of the appreciation measures with comprehension scores indicate that identification of an incongruity, whether criterial or non-criterial, added to the appreciation of the cartoon. None of the correlations involving incongruity alone versus incongruity and resolution were significant, suggesting that resolution adds nothing to the appreciation of cartoon humor. Shultz suggests that this may be a result of the interviewing technique in that children may have been reluctant to mention resolutions even while knowing them.

The second experiment was designed to demonstrate the humor-arousing aspects of resolution. The procedure was the same but these children were shown the originals and resolution-removed forms of different cartoons. The child's response to "What is funny?" and "Why is that happening?" was queried fully in this study and the children were encouraged to reveal everything they knew about the cartoon. The analysis yielded the following indication: "Besides providing a manipulation check on the cartoon alterations, the resolution type X cartoon form strongly suggested a tendency to provide resolution for the incongruities discovered in the cartoon (p. 470)." This is debatable, since precisely that form of response was elicited by the extensive probing. As in the previous experiment, children were not led to expect that the cartoons were not necessarily equally funny, thus perhaps predisposing the children to a tendency to respond in the same way to all the cartoons. The correlations between appreciation and incongruity alone versus incongruity and resolution were computed. Again, the cartoons in which an incongruity was isolated were judged funnier than were cartoons in which no incongruity was isolated. However, the children tended to cite criterial incongruities in originals only slightly more frequently than they did to resolution-removed forms. That the children judged cartoons funnier when able to identify an incongruity was true at all age levels and for both cartoon types. The correlations also indicated that the children judged the cartoons to be funnier when they were able to resolve the incongruity identified. The evidence minimally supports the necessity of resolvable incongruity. This work presents some interesting problems because the author is distinguishing criterial and non-criterial incongruities and resolutions. Children do not necessarily respond to cartoons in the same way that adults do; they may find the same cartoons equally funny but for entirely different reasons. The differentiation of criterial and non-criterial responses may be inhibiting rather than facilitating an understanding of children's humor. This may be particularly true in relation to cartoon as opposed to verbal humor because more associations are possible. In verbal humor the incongruity may be focused more specifically.

Shultz and Horibe (1974) attempted to apply a framework similar to that used in the previous study of cartoon humor to the study of verbal jokes in which the resolvable incongruity was embedded in a linguistic ambiguity. In a previous study, Shultz and Pilon (1973) investigated the development of the ability to detect verbal ambiguities of four types: lexical, phonological, surface- and deep-structure. This study was conducted partially with the aim of obtaining insights valuable to the study of verbal humor. They found that:

> The ability to detect phonological ambiguity appeared first, with the largest increase occurring between 6 and 9 years. Second to appear was the detection of lexical ambiguity, which exhibited a steady, linear increase with age. Detection of the two types of syntactic ambiguity did not appear until age 12 (1973, p. 12).

In the present study, jokes containing the previously investigated ambiguities and another set containing a nonlinguistic ambiguity were employed along with resolution- and incongruity-removed forms of each type.

e.g. Lexical ambiguity type:

Order! Order in the court!
Ham and cheese on rye, please, Your Honor!

Incongruity-removed form:

Order! Order in the court!
I only want the truth to be known, Your Honor!

Resolution-removed form:

Silence! Silence in the court!
Ham and cheese on rye, please, Your Honor!

In their introduction to this study, Shultz and Pilon isolate a particular aspect of Freud's theory of development of joking among children. According to Freud, play with words develops into jest and later into the joke:

> The initial stage in which pleasure of rediscovery of the familiar can be derived from play with words without regard for meaning or coherence, is brought to an end by criticism and the developing logic faculty. After this, in order to gain pleasure in nonsense there must be sense in nonsense, the play with words must have meaning and employ the technical methods of joking (1960, p. 128-9).

Shultz and Horibe view their formulations of the development of joking as consistent with Freud's in that "Following an early stage in which the child enjoys unresolvable incongruity or nonsense, there is a second stage in which he begins to prefer resolvable or meaningful jokes (p. 15)." This experiment was then intended to test this two-stage theory and examine the transition from incongruity to resolvable incongruity. "The assumption was made that subjects preferring original over resolution-removed jokes were sensitive to a resolution structure while subjects preferring resolution-removed over incongruity-removed jokes are sensitive to an incongruity structure (p. 15)."

Fifteen boys and girls from grades 1, 3, 5 and 7, averaging 6, 8, 10 and 12 years old, were presented the three forms of different jokes. In this study the experimenters indicated that some of what the child was to hear was funny and some was not. A spontaneous mirth score and a funniness rating was obtained for each joke. The children were asked to explain what was funny, if anything, about each joke. Probe questions were used to elicit responses specific to the ambiguity if the child did not comment upon these spontaneously. Comprehension data was scored for identification of each element of the incongruity and for elaboration of the two possible meanings of each element.

Children in grades 3, 5 and 7 judged the original to be funnier than the resolution-removed form which was in turn judged to be funnier than the ambiguity-removed form. The grade 1 children found the original and the resolution forms equally funny but funnier than the ambiguity-removed forms. The significance of the differences of humor ratings between grades was not tested. The older children appear to appreciate both incongruity and resolution, whereas the 6 year olds appreciated incongruity but not resolution. This finding is consistent with that of Kreitler and Kreitler (1970) who found that five and six year old children who employed cognitive strategies which recognized absurdities (incongruities) but made no effort to resolve them showed greatest appreciation.

The comprehension data indicate that comprehension of the four elements of the ambiguity in the original forms of the jokes increases significantly between grades one and three. Comprehension of the hidden meaning (e.g. order as a request for food) increased across all grades; comprehension of the biased meaning (e.g. order as a request for silence) increased between grades one and five. The drop in identification at the higher levels is explained by the authors as a function of these elements having become too obvious for the children to point out and the probing being inadequate. The increase in comprehension of the two meanings, however, indicates that the elements were comprehended though not identified.

The data substantiate the consistency between Freud's position and that of these authors, even though they do not return to a discussion of this consistency. The responses of older children show differences in comprehension and appreciation that are sensitive to resolution of the incongruity while those of younger children do not. Freud (1905) suggested that:

> The psychogenesis of jokes has taught us that the pleasure in a joke is derived from play with words or from the liberation of nonsense, and that the meaning of the joke is merely intended to protect that pleasure from being done away with by criticism (p. 131).

If he was right, then appreciation should remain constant while the form of the joke must change in order to satisfy the refinement of inhibitory factors. This could be tested with the data Shultz and Pilon have available by testing whether the appreciation of the resolution-removed forms decreases.

The reporting of the developmental differences in the detection of linguistic ambiguities is cursory. The hidden meanings of phonological ambiguities are detected more often than any other type. The detection of linguistic ambiguities seems to occur earlier in the jokes than it does in sentences. The authors suggest that this may be a result of the greater number of contextual cues that the jokes provide.

Shultz's latest published study (1974b) was undertaken in order to investigate the development of the appreciation of riddles. He was attempting to determine: 1) whether or not the structures of incongruity and resolution also govern the appreciation of riddles; and 2) whether or not the transition occurs at the same time in riddles as in jokes. The appreciation measures obtained were the same as those in the joke study. The grade 3, 5 and 7 children thought the original forms funnier than either of the altered forms which did not differ while the first graders rated all forms equally funny. The relationships between grade and comprehension of the four elements were the same as were found in the study of jokes. In all of these studies comprehension was shown to increase with age, and appreciation varied according to form. However, a relationship between comprehension and appreciation is never fully demonstrated. No analysis of appreciation by comprehension is reported. Within the parameters of scientific validity implicitly assumed by Shultz _et al_. in undertaking these types of investigations, they have not demonstrated a relationship between appreciation and comprehension. This author contends that this relationship will not be demonstrated until we have a clearer understanding of the relationship between these strictly cognitive variables which occupy the attention of these investigators and other variables which might be loosely defined as more affective or emotional variables. And further, that this can only be established if and when we attend to content and function in addition to form of humor. These are interdependent variables which probably cannot be isolated for independent investigation.

CHAPTER III: REVIEW OF FURTHER RELATED LITERATURE

In the first section of this chapter, Freud's work and later psychoanalytic contributions to the study of children's humor will be examined with specific attention paid to some of the fundamental assertions about the nature of motivation and activity. In the second section, the social or shared dimensions of adult humor are examined with a view to formulating some understanding of this dimension of children's humor.

PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDIES OF CHILDREN'S HUMOR

Freud formulated his position on wit, humor, and the comic in Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious in 1905. This work remains one of the most comprehensive in the area. His basic thesis is embodied in one of his concluding statements:

> The pleasure in jokes has seemed to us to arise from an economy in expenditure upon inhibition, the pleasure in the comic from an economy in expenditure upon ideation (cathexis) and the pleasure in humor from an economy in expenditure upon feeling. In all three modes of working of our mental apparatus, the pleasure is derived from an economy (p. 236).

The energy upon which one has economized by subverting an unacceptable unconscious impulse is then released through laughter.

One of the distinctions formulated by Freud which remains central to current humor research is the elaboration of innocent and tendentious jokes. The tendentious joke serves either of two purposes: either it is a hostile joke serving aggression, satire, or defence, or it is an obscene joke serving to expose. Freud suggests that we laugh harder at tendentious jokes because they "have sources of pleasure at their disposal besides those open to innocent jokes in which all the pleasure is in some way linked to their technique (1960, p. 102)." Along the dimension of technique, Freud distinguished verbal and conceptual joking. The conceptual joking technique depends on faulty reasoning, unification, or indirect identification. The verbal joke involves play with words. Both verbal and conceptual jokes can be either innocent or tendentious.

In 1928, the article entitled "Humor" was published, indicating that although his position on humor had not changed substantially, his formulations in this area had developed consistently with other reformulations during the intervening twenty-three years. At least two other works, The Id and the Superego and Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety, published in 1923 and 1926, seem to have immediate bearing on his 1928 article. His re-assessment of the origin of anxiety is contained in the second work cited:

> I believed anxiety to originate in every instance automatically through an economic process, whereas the present conception of anxiety as a signal function intended by the ego for the purpose of influencing the pleasure-pain mechanism renders us independent of this economic constriction. It does not contradict this supposition that for the arousing of affect the ego employs precisely the energy set free by the withdrawal of cathexis in repression, but it has become unimportant to distinguish with which moiety of energy this is accomplished (1949, p. 80).

Instead, the psychic entity from which the impulse originates has taken greater prominence. In the case of wit, it is the unconscious as it previously had been; in the case of humor, the intervention of the superego is crucial to the saving of expenditure of affect. The superego takes the parental role, that is, one of "recognizing and smiling at the sufferings which seem to the child so big (1928, p. 3)" in relation to the ego:

> To the super-ego, thus inflated, the ego can appear tiny and all its interests trivial, and with this fresh distribution of energy it may be an easy matter for it to suppress the potential reactions of the ego (1928, p. 4).

In so doing, the "super-ego is really repudiating reality and serving an illusion (1928, p. 5)", thus reducing a dangerous reality to child's play. Underlying these formulations is the continuous operation of the pleasure principle, the desire of the organism to return to a quiescent state. Humor and wit allow the organism, through the avenue of intellectual capability, to reduce impulse and stimulation. The liberation of energy upon which laughter depends results from the maintenance of the steady state, the assertion of invulnerability in the face of painful realities:

> The denial of the claim of reality and the triumph of the pleasure principle cause humor to approximate to the regressive or reactionary processes which engage our attention so largely in psychopathology. By its repudiation of the possibility of suffering, it takes its place in the great series of methods, devised by the mind of man, for evading the compulsion to suffer... Owing to this connection, humor possesses a dignity which is wholly lacking, for instance, in wit for the aim of wit is either simply to afford gratification, or, in so doing, to provide an outlet for aggressive tendencies (1928, p. 3).

However, Freud's formulations of wit and humor must be considered in the light of Schachtel's (1959) re-examination of Freud's basic conception of motivation and affect:

> What Freud overlooked was that from birth on the infant and the child also show an eagerness to turn toward an increasing variety of things in the environing reality and that sensory contact with them is enjoyed rather than experienced as a disturbing excitation (p. 9).

He presents experimental evidence that demonstrates the infant's actively seeking in addition to actively avoiding stimulation. After the development of object permanence, the child will remain interested in an object which is no longer perceptually present:

> Activity-affect from this stage on can be felt not only in relation to perceived objects but also in relation to ideas of objects and of activities, and it is this felt aspect of the drive which links child and adult to the world (p. 33).

When it is understood that the human child both actively engages and actively avoids the surrounding reality, then basic emotions can be reformulated to accommodate both engagement and avoidance. The activity-affects function to continuously expand one's encounter with the world; the embeddedness-affects facilitate avoidance of the separation from embeddedness, the prototype of which is intra-uterine existence. Complete embeddedness is "a mode of existence in which the organism lives in a completely sheltering and nourishing environment from which it directly draws all its energy supply without having to go after it (p. 58)."

In recognizing only the pleasure principle, Freud recognized the embeddedness-affects. He postulated both signal and disruptive functions of anxiety which were governed by the pleasure principle. Schachtel, having recognized the dual nature of motivation, is able to reformulate the role of anxiety:

> The signal function of anxiety is always an ambiguous one, signalling the danger of separation from embeddedness and, while tempting man to go back to embeddedness, still leaving open the possibility of the resolution to go forward and encounter the world. The disruptive, paralyzing function leaves no choice; its function is to make man avoid the separation from embeddedness by paralyzing him and taking away from him the power of decision and action (p. 46).

And further, that "The unknown danger in anxiety is the new, unknown state of being when leaving a particular constellation of embeddedness (p. 47)."

Freud defined pleasure negatively, as a relief from excitation, as a return to embeddedness. Schachtel postulates dual sources of pleasure; one based on active seeking and enjoyment of stimulation, the other based on a preservation of embeddedness governed by need-satisfaction:

> The distinction between this enjoyment and need-satisfaction is that the former is based on encounter with the stimulus rather than on its abolishment. The gourmet wants to keep the mild tension of his appetite and to stay with the taste of food rather than to still his appetite as quickly as possible (p. 66).

If Schachtel's reformulations are accurate, then humor can be viewed as producing pleasure not solely from the relief from anxiety, but also as an activity-affect--the continuing tension lures one on into encounter. The joke made in the given situation may be a mechanism by which one continues one's engagement even while recognizing the adversity of the reality which would be satisfied by flight; one continues to engage oneself in the face of the adversity. Humor, within this framework, can serve both activity- and embeddedness-affects.

Freud's view of the child as a defective adult seems to be the basis of his formulations of the comic. Childhood is simply a state of uncontrolled pleasure-seeking which must gradually come under external and internal control. The defect of childhood appears to be the ability to escape sanction. Freud departs from Bergson (1924), who suggests that the comic may be a carry-over from childhood and suggests instead that the comic arises from the comparison of the adult to the child. "I am unable to decide," he writes, "whether degradation to being a child is only a special case of comic degradation or whether everything comic is based fundamentally on degradation to being a child (1905, p. 228)." Children, he maintains, are initially incapable of experiencing the comic, but laugh out of pure pleasure in situations which adults would find comic. They have a comic effect on adults when they conduct themselves as serious adults. Adults are comic when they are perceived as stupid or naughty children.

The development of the joke-making process begins in child's play with words or thoughts without the constraint of logic. The next stage is the jest, in which the child is "prolonging the yield of pleasure from play, but at the same time silencing the objections raised by criticism which would not allow the pleasure feeling to emerge (1905, p. 129)." Later, the child is capable of making a full-fledged joke. Kris (1937) extends and modified Freud's original work on the comic and brings it in line with the reformulations of humor contained in the later article by Freud. Kris maintains that a child finds an experience funny only if it has complete control of the function in question. Accompanying the comic experience is a feeling of anxiety over one's own power of mastery of an averted superfluous anxiety. The motivating factor for the child is not one of superiority but rather one of accomplishment: not one of "I can do better", but one of "I can do it" (1937, p. 83). Kris distinguishes the sense of mastery active in play from that which is active in the comic experience. In play, the child plays out his sense of mastery in the present. Comic pleasure, on the other hand, rests on past accomplishments of the ego. Kris does not accept Freud's claim that the child is incapable of experiencing the comic. He says instead that the child of one to two years gradually comes to an awareness of the comic. The progression seems to be from fear of, to interest in, and then to arrival at, pleasure. The comic can also serve to overcome half-assimilated fear, since it is bound up with past conflicts of the ego. Repeating the accomplishment is reassuring.

Because the reformulations of Freudian principles by ego psychologists, of whom Kris is one, do not include a re-examination of the pleasure principle, the conception of humor remains necessarily bound up with past accomplishments of the ego. Active, self-sustaining engagement as part of the comic exploration which can be a testing of new modes of encountering the environment is not recognized.

Wolfenstein's study of children's humor (1953, 1954), one of the most extensive investigations in the area, assumed a psychoanalytic model of humor and development. She collected her material from children between the ages of four and seventeen in two New York private schools by interviewing children alone and in small groups. During these interviews, she encouraged the children to talk about their families, peers, etc., and found that in order to hear the jokes that children tell, it was necessary to ask specifically about them since these jokes were usually exchanged among children out of the hearing of adults. She found that children used joking to transform feelings of anxiety, hostility and disappointment. Conflicts arising from wishes, criticisms and logic which were handled in a joking manner were less painful. The earliest form of verbal joking stemmed from the child's ambiguous conceptions of his or her personal and sexual identity. Verbal mislabelling in the form of calling a girl a boy or calling a youngster by the wrong name is initially frightening because it threatens a change of identity. When it is understood by the children that no actual transformation is worked by a change of label, these name changes are understood as jokes. Later, children deliberately make these shifts among themselves in order to make a joke.

Jokes, understood as mechanisms by which one can overcome emotional difficulties, indicate some of the underlying concerns of children. Wolfenstein's discussion of the following two riddles is illustrative:

> What has holes but holds water?
> A sponge.
>
> What is a lady always looking for but hoping not to find?
> A hole in her stocking.
>
> The first suggests that the female, though she has a hole instead of a penis, is nevertheless able to control her water. The second expresses with slight distortion that a lady is always hoping to find that she has a penis, but finds a hole instead (1954, p. 112).

And further:

> How shall we interpret the question: "Did you ever hear a moth bawl?" In form it resembles other joking questions which begin with "Did you ever hear---" and may be taken as referring to what the child hears at night. The intercourse of the parents is here condensed with the father-killing to which the son feels motivated by it. What about the double meaning of "moth bawl?" Moth balls protect your clothes as clothes protect your balls; or, in the symbolism of the joke, the coat itself stands for the genitals. Thus the thought of defense against castration is again expressed. Killing the father (making the moth bawl) is the best protection (moth ball) (1954, p. 153).

These particular analyses of riddles represent the worst that has come down to us in the name of psychoanalytic tradition. The absurdity and error hinges around the confusion of phallus and penis.

The little moron jokes which were characteristic of latency age joke tellers indicate, according to Wolfenstein, their preoccupation with learning and ambivalence toward knowledge. The riddles which are popular at this age are an assertion of growing abilities: "It is the hearer who cannot answer, and the moron in the joke, not the child who tells it, who is stupid (1954, p. 156)." These joking forms almost disappear in pre-puberty and adolescence and reappear when preceding stages are no longer as contemptible and it is no longer imperative to differentiate oneself from a younger group. "However, the emotional difficulties of each phase of life continue to be to some extent unfinished business... Thus we may continue to enjoy jokes whose emotional sources are in various past stages of development (p. 157)."

Wolfenstein states:

> In the development of the more complicated forms of joking, two processes keep pace with one another: the child's increasing scruples about simple release of impulse and his progressive acquisition of techniques for circumventing these scruples. The mastery of these devices brings not only pleasure in virtuosity, but momentary triumph over inhibition, and the response of others (p. 191).

At the onset of adolescence, children begin to make jokes about themselves:

> In the redirection of aggression against oneself, there is also a recapturing of pleasure of self-exhibiton; this becomes harmless and permissible as one exhibits oneself in a ridiculous light (p. 191).

Wolfenstein also elaborates the gradual development of the child's ability to distinguish joking and non-joking forms of discourse. Initially, children may be upset by an adult who jokes about something they have said or done. In order to be able to distinguish the two forms, children must first become aware that others, adults included, make flights into fantasy and non-logical, non-rational discourse. Before joking conventions are understood, children sometimes react to jokes as simply silly or stupid because it does not yet make sense that others think in this mode. The ability to distinguish joking and non-joking frames is established slowly in childhood and continues to develop throughout adulthood. Mastery depends to a large extent on the content of the joke.

Helmers (German publication 1965, cited in McGhee, 1971c) observed that the reconfirmation of the organization and orderliness of the world is the basis of children's joke productions:

> Words form one of the basic order carriers of a child's world. Every joke, every departure from the norm, means an attempt to shake up this order himself or hear it pushed around by another. But, in the final analysis, the order emerges unscathed. The child's relief that the order has proved unshakable is felt as happiness and breaks through in laughter (p. 330).

The departures from the norms of which Helmers speaks can be viewed as the child's attempt to move out from embeddedness. With the protection afforded by cloaking the exploration in humor, the child can experiment with re-ordering and re-creation. Helmers suggests that the order emerges unscathed. Though not necessarily astoundingly original to adult ears, the re-emergence of the order through the child's re-creation is, perhaps, the child's active and necessary exploration of the cultural and symbolic bounds within which he/she develops.

Sutton-Smith views the riddle as a "working model of the adult-child relationship of oral integration, ambiguity and humiliation (1973, p. 7)." This conception of riddles bears certain similarities to his cross-cultural study of games as phenomena reflecting enculturation processes (Roberts and Sutton-Smith, 1963, 1966). The specific purpose of his study of riddles is the investigation of "the specific semantic devices that give the riddler the materials for his exercise of arbitrary power in the rhetorical context (1973, p. 7)." The structural accounting of these devices should then reflect the types of ambiguities that children must contend with in the adult-child interaction.

As a result of his examination of riddles, Sutton-Smith proposes a structural definition of a riddle:

> The riddle is a puzzling question with an answer made arbitrary by the fact that the subject was expecting to react to meaning A and was given meaning B, but made systematic by the fact that meaning A and B share another semantic relationship. (1973, p. 6)

A definition of a riddle which focuses on the violation of expectations, as this one does, may be inadequate to the explanation of humor appreciation. This, however, is not the issue here, since the explanation is one of structure rather than appreciation.

The above is a departure from the structural definition of a riddle proposed by Georges and Dundes:

> A traditional verbal expression which contains one or more descriptive elements, a pair of which may be in opposition; the referents of the elements to be guessed. (1963, p. 116)

This definition, which is adequate to a cross-cultural accounting of most adult riddles, only handles two types of children's riddles. Sutton-Smith employed Piagetian-derived categories which specify the nature of the systematic relationship between the two meanings by specifying the ambiguities of verbal classification, re-classification and multiple classifications (Piaget,1955a). The oppositional/non-oppositional distinction made by Georges and Dundes is redefined by Sutton-Smith as a distinction of explicit re-classification and non-criterial classifications. In addition, he employs the categories of pre-riddles, implicit re-classifications, riddle parodies, non-criterial relationships and multiple classifications. Application of these categories to a large collection of riddles obtained from children ages 6 to 14 reveals that they adequately account for 70% of the riddles. The available report of the study does not explain the remaining 30% in any way. That this conception is adequate to a structural understanding of the ambiguities contained in most of the riddles told by children appears to be tentatively substantiated. However, that these mediate the ambiguities with which children must contend in adult-child relationships remains to be tested.

SHARED DIMENSIONS OF HUMOR

From the review of the literature on children's humor, it can be seen that the social dimensions of humor--its shared nature and its role and function in groups--have received scant attention. By reviewing some selected studies of these dimensions of adult humor, some insight which may be useful in developing an approach to children's humor may be gained.

It is necessary to return to Freud. He defined the liberating element of humor as the ego's assertion of invulnerability in the face of painful realities. One makes a joke which allows one to escape. From within his model, the liberation which is experienced as pleasure on the individual level can be seen to function to conserve the orders of the realities with which one deals. Since pleasure, by definition, is a return to a quiescent state, it precludes action. Action and pleasure as acquiescence are opposite routes of expression. The liberation is in fact a recognition of powerlessness. A question arises directly out of Schachtel's re-working of motivation and pleasure--that of determining, in a way similar to that attempted on an individual level in the last chapter, whether humor serves both activity- and embeddedness-affects on an interpersonal scale.

Schachtel (1959) describes the conservatism of embeddedness:

> The normal embeddedness in the sphere of interpersonal relations consists in the relying on the relative stability of these relations, e.g. that the attitude of one's wife, husband, friends will not suddenly and unaccountably change. Man is also embedded normally in the countless patterns of routine, convention, more or less automatic behavior on his own part and on the part of others. He is embedded in his family, his home, his work, the circle of friends, his town, his language, his culture, and his country. These publicly or privately "institutionalized" patterns, while created by man and changeable by him, in a way take the place of the instinctive behavior in which the animals are embedded. The embeddedness function of these patterns plays a larger role, psychologically, in the conservative tendencies of man, in his fear of new individual as well as social ways of life (p. 52).

Given that as humans we share a normal and even necessary embeddedness, what does being able to laugh and joke about its features indicate? Formally and informally institutionalized joking relationships merit consideration because they function precisely to preserve hierarchy, order, and consequently embeddedness. Radcliffe-Brown (1965) has investigated joking relationships among various defined groups of people. These ritualized joking relationships function to maintain a social equilibrium in small closed groups of people who must live in relative harmony. Preventing open conflict which could be highly disruptive by institutionalizing patterns of relating based on joking allows expression, albeit indirect, of potentially disruptive forces in shared and acceptable forms. These also prevent communication between certain group members except within a joking framework in situations where open communication cannot be risked, for example, between a man and his wife's parents. These are relations of "permitted disrespect" which are "a continuous expression of that social disjunction which is an essential part of the whole structural situation (p. 95)." It would seem that these function to perpetuate an embeddedness while supporting the recognition that the conflicts exist. The avoidance of the possibility of conflict coerces continuing acceptance of the dominant patterns.

Bradney (1957) and Coser (1960) explored the nature of joking relationships among co-workers in hierarchically organized institutions: department store and hospital. Though the settings were very different, their findings are similarly based on the status differences and commonalities of the workers. Senior people joked at the expense of juniors, juniors joked at the expense of each other and themselves in order to deal with the difficulties inherent in their positions. Zijderveld (1968) suggests in reviewing these studies that the informal joking relationships of the "joking down" variety are "paternalistic devices to keep the lower ranks in their place (p. 297)" and, as such, are "part of a perverted kinship system (p. 298)."

These studies all assume an expression/action dichotomy: the expression of an impulse in sanctioned forms alleviates the necessity of acting upon it. Joking is understood as a coping mechanism, and consequently is a conservative force in that the order is not challenged and its potential challenges are controlled. It is conservative rather than repressive because it does allow the recognition of the conflicts.

Stephenson (1951) studied anthologized class stratification jokes. He contends that these, by virtue of having been anthologized, have entered the public domain and attempts to determine whether they reflect coercion or conflict. He concludes that:

> The emphasis minimizes the importance of economic differences and stresses the notion and value of equality, ridicules the concept of any base conflict, asserts the soundness of the American system, and emphasizes the virtue of charity, initiative and ambition. Deviations from these values receive the balance of directed aggression rather than any conceptions of an inherent conflict within the culture itself (p. 575).

Greer (1971) discusses the coercive nature of the jokes about women. Departures from the stereotypic sexual roles merit negative sanction. The two studies suggest that the humor of a given group reflects the prevailing social mythology and delimits the basic expectations and punishments of that order. The jokes reflect an avoidance of the recognition of conflict in a way similar to that in the previous studies. Insofar as they do, they can be thought to perpetuate embeddedness. However, paradoxically, the joke may also demonstrate the seriousness of the conflict to those who already recognize it.

Freud (1928) discusses "gallows humor", and cites the example of the criminal who is being led to execution on a Monday morning saying, "This is a good way to begin the week." The joke, he says, is not resigned but rebellious and an assertion of invulnerability: "one spares onself the affects to which the situation would normally give rise and overrides with a jest the possibility of such [illegible] an emotional display (p. 2)." This author would disagree with this being designated "gallows humor" and that it is not resigned, as it constitutes a denial rather than an engagement. It might be more appropriately labelled "black humor".

Obrdlik (1942) discusses what might be more appropriately called gallows humor from what might be understood as an activity/embeddedness perspective:

> Humor, in general, and gallows humor more specifically, is a social phenomenon the importance of which, under certain circumstances, may be tremendous. It originates in the process of social interaction and bears the marks of the particular group by which it is created and accepted. Its social character is revealed by the fact that it changes its contents--and sometimes the form in which it is presented--in accordance with the character of the group and the social events to which it reacts (p. 715).

The observations which are the basis of Obrdlik's writing were made during Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia. In formulating the role of humor in the ability of an oppressed group to deal with a threatening situation, he points out that the humor is directed very specifically at the oppressor and serves to ridicule and degrade.

> This teleological character of gallows humor determines its social function, which is two-fold--positive and negative. Its positive effect is manifested above all in the strengthening of morale and the spirit of resistance of people who struggle for their individual and national survival; its negative effect (which, of course, is again something positive from the viewpoint of the oppressed) reveals itself by its disintegrating influence among those against whom it is directed. In both instances it proves to be a very powerful weapon. Finally, gallows humor is a reliable index of the morale of the oppressed, whereas the reaction to it on the part of the oppressors tells a long story about the actual strength of the dictators: if they can afford to ignore it they are strong (p. 716).

Gallows humor serves strengthening rather than self-disparaging motives and allows one to continue to deal with the harshness of a situation. Hannerz (1969) describes the humor he heard while studying a Black ghetto in Washington, D.C., and tries to understand it in a similar manner. The humor reflects disparagement of the oppressor and is indicative of cohesion in the face of adversity.

Douglas (1968) suggests that "laughter and jokes, since they attack classification and hierarchy, are obviously symbols for expressing community in the sense of unhierarchized, undifferentiated social relations (p. 370)." Perhaps this kind of ability to joke is a reflection of a very specific type of survival value of individuals and groups, and, because of its active nature, more appropriately deserves to be designated a liberating element. Liberation within this perspective is not in disengagement, but rather in continuing engagement despite the recognition that it may all be futile anyway. It is an affirmation of strength and action. Pleasure derived from these expressions is not in quiescence (embeddedness) but rather in continuing resistance and solidarity (activity). Freud would have called this wit because it is hostile and disparaging; he conceptualized its serving "simply to afford gratification, or, in so doing, to provide an outlet for aggressive tendencies (1928, p. 3)", without recognizing a shared dimension that has a larger purpose.

Weisstein (1973) examines the rebellious humor of her Eastern European Jewish heritage and queries the lack of development of a comparable genre among women. She suggests that the lack of identification of a shared oppression is one of the factors precluding the development of an active, rebellious humor. This is consistent with the relationship between the identification class and humor appreciation as investigated by LaFave (1972). The fact that many women no longer laugh or are amused by the jokes which are made at the expense of their personhood may be an indication of a growing awareness of that class of which they are a part and a striking out from the embeddedness of their "naturally given" roles.

The preceding discussion touches upon complex and diverse issues which have simply not been adequately resolved. The purpose of including this discussion as background for this particular study, which does not include a direct examination of these issues, is two-fold:

1. The exploration of the conception of activity and embeddedness functions of humor may prove useful to the development of an approach to the understanding of humor which clarifies the dual function of humor on both an individual and social scale. To conceive of humor only as a coping mechanism limits the ability to understand the dynamics of humor which support understanding and action, those which encourage and sustain a critical detachment or a departure from embeddedness.

2. The sociological literature focuses the reciprocal relationship between jokes we make and the conditions of our lives. This would appear to be specifically demonstrated by the development of humor in specific situations; for example, Obrdlik's report, and is generally true in that we cannot understand and appreciate jokes which lie outside the realm of our experiences--either linguistic or cultural.

CHAPTER IV: THE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

This study follows from the central question: What characterizes the jokes told by children? This chapter will provide the rationale for the design of the study and describe the sample, procedure for data collection, and the method of analysis. The description of the jokes by age and a comparison of these is then presented. In the final section, the limitations of this approach are discussed.

THE METHOD

The Rationale

Because the author was interested in looking at what the children themselves defined as jokes and funny stories, a definition of humor was not advanced. The children were simply asked to discuss their favorite jokes and funny stories and were left to define these according to their own awareness. That children's jokes are similar to adult jokes might be anticipated but not required in order to meet any prior definitions of jokes or humor. The intent of the study was the investigation of only one form of humor and the comic--the joke or funny story.

Since the intent was to describe the humor productions, it seemed necessary to obtain the kinds of jokes children exchanged. Though the research was conducted in a school setting, the children were assured that the activity had no relationship to the school and its activities and that no one in the school would hear the tapes. The only adult involved, the experimenter, introduced herself as a student doing an assignment, and was not present during the actual joke-telling sessions. It cannot be said that the adult presence was removed, as it cannot be without using highly dubious means, but rather that it was defined for the children as clearly and non-threateningly as possible. The dimension of social desirability which McGhee (1971c) concedes is necessary in the experimental situation was not enforced here since it might have immediately eliminated many of the jokes. The assurances of confidentiality were partly motivated by this consideration. Also, if they asked, the children were told that any joke that they found funny was suitable.

Another problem which one frequently encounters in the humor research is one of the specificity of the source and the comprehension of the humor stimuli. Eysenck (1971) documents his consternation in finding that even while using what he thought to be relatively straightforward cartoons, the precise response to "What is funny about this?" varied tremendously. McGhee (1971c) draws attention to this problem and suggests that observational studies might provide data which might be tested experimentally. Freud (1905) pointed out that the enjoyment of a joke is such that one is unable to decide immediately "what share of the pleasure arises from its joking form and what share from its apt thought content (p. 133)." Two issues evolve from these observations: first, that it cannot be assumed that a given joke appeals to different people for the same reasons and, second, that even if we do know the technique employed in the joke we do not know how the content and the technique interact to determine the total humor experience. In this study, neither comprehension nor appreciation measures were methodically obtained. They would seem to be unnecessary to describe the jokes and funny stories exchanged by the children.

Jokes were obtained from children of 5, 9 and 13 years of age because these ages had already been used in previous experimental studies (McGhee, 1971) in which conversation skills appeared significant to the comprehension of specific forms of humor. Though not the focus of this study, the information available could be helpful when considering the description. In addition to representing reasonably discrete cognitive stages, these children would also likely represent different psychosocial stages.

The Sample

The subjects for this study were drawn from an elementary and a junior high school within the Edmonton Separate School District in the light industrial north-west of the city. The Separate School District serves the Catholic residents of Edmonton. The pre-schoolers attended a nondenominational Play School located in the same area and run by the City of Edmonton, Parks and Recreation Department.

Four groups of four children (2 male, 2 female) were drawn at random from class lists. The subjects within each group of 9 and 13 year olds were drawn from the same classroom but each group was drawn from a separate classroom. The sample included 16 children who were 9 years old and 16 who were 13 at the time of the data collection. Consultation with the classroom teacher intended to prevent subjects who were openly hostile to each other from participating in one group proved unnecessary because the problem did not arise.

The 5 year old subjects were children in two play school groups which were run by the same teacher. Each group had 22 children (13 females, 9 males, and 11 females, 11 males) who regularly attended. An attempt to collect data in one other play school was unsuccessful.

The Procedure

The original plan was to interview each 5 year old individually in order to obtain the jokes. This having proved unsuccessful, the children were gathered as a group and asked by their teacher: "How many of you know some jokes and funny stories?" After a chorus of "I do's!", the teacher asked individual children to tell their jokes. This session, which was tape-recorded, was substituted for a story time which was part of the day's routine, and continued until the children were no longer attentive and/or could not tell any more jokes.

The jokes were obtained from the 9 and 13 year olds in a different manner. The groups of four subjects were taken to the test room by the examiner who tried to establish rapport by chatting primarily about the school. After the children were familiarized and equipped with the recording devices and the machines were checked, they were given the following instructions;

> I am a student and one of the assignments I have chosen to do is to find out about the things which boys and girls think are funny. I need your help in order to find this out.
>
> I am going to turn on the tape recorder and leave the room for 20 minutes. In that time, I would like you to talk about your favorite jokes and funny stories and decide on three that you think are really funny. Any questions?

The examiner then left the room. If, when the examiner returned after 20 minutes, the group had not selected the three jokes, they were instructed to continue until they could do so and to then inform the examiner who was in a nearby room.

THE DATA

The Rationale

The tapes of the joke-telling sessions were transcribed verbatim by the author and checked by at least one other person.

Preliminary inspection of the data revealed:

1. That the children defined the request that they tell jokes and funny stories in such a way that they exchanged what are traditionally known as jokes and riddles. For the purpose of the description, these were abstracted from the records of the sessions.

2. Two dimensions of these jokes and riddles which were immediately apparent: the first, structural, and the second, content, similarities. It seemed that these regularities of content and structure did not coincide. That is, knowing the structure did not make possible a prediction of content and vice versa.

3. The possibility of examining regularly recurring structural and content features of which understanding was necessary in order to fully understand the joke or riddle itself without inferring the intent, comprehension or appreciation of the particular joke-teller or listeners.

The Definitions and Descriptive Categories

At this point, the decision to work first with the structural features of the riddles and then with the jokes was made. This seemed appropriate because the technique of the riddles appeared to be simpler and more straightforward, and because there existed at least two other studies which provided a starting point for this particular study. The following structural definition of a riddle had been proposed by Sutton-Smith (1973) and seemed useful to this description of the riddles obtained:

> A riddle is a puzzling question with an answer made arbitrary by the fact that the subject was expecting to react to meaning A and was given meaning B, but was made systematic by the fact that meaning A and B share another semantic relationship. (p. 6)

His classifications of the semantic relationships between conclusions A and B which follow from this definition were also applied:

Type 1: Pre-riddles
e.g. Why did the man chop down the chimney?
He needed the bricks.

A pre-riddle is a puzzling question with an arbitrary answer. It does not meet the criteria of riddles which require a systematic relationship between question and answer.

Type 2: Implicit reclassification (Homonymic Riddles)
e.g. Why did the dog go out in the hot sun?
He wanted to be a hot dog.

This type of riddle is a puzzling question with an answer which maintains a homonymic continuity from question to answer, but which reclassifies the synonymic significance of the object. The reclassification is implicit; it is recognized after the answer is presented.

Type 3: Riddle Parodies
e.g. Why did the chicken cross the road?
He wanted to get to the other side.

How much dirt in a hole 3 x 3 x 3 feet?
None.

The riddle parody is a question made puzzling by the expectation that its answer requires a play on words but in which a straightforward answer is provided. In some cases, it is difficult to distinguish a pre-riddle from these traditional catch riddles and is only possible on the basis of the well-established idiosyncratic pattern of the reply to catch riddles.

Type 4: Non-criterial relationships
e.g. What does one flea say to another as they go out the door?
Shall we walk or take a dog?

In these riddles, the expectations implied in the meaning of the question are not met in the answer. Instead of requiring a reply based on classificatory logic, the answer is based on the violation of standing relationships between objects. The new relationship between objects or events is improbable or of low-order probability.

Type 5: Explicit reclassification
e.g. What has an ear but cannot hear?
Corn.

When is a window good to eat?
When it is jammed.

In these riddles, a classification is presented, then one of its criterial attributes is denied. The denied attribute may be a denial of a normal part of the object (e.g. 2), of a basic function (e.g. 1), or of a usual consequence of the function. The reclassification is explicit but not always presented in oppositional form (e.g. 2).

Type 6: Non-criterial classification
e.g. What is white inside and red outside?
An apple.

In these riddles, two contrasted attributes which are not central to the class are to be classified. The classification can be literal or metaphoric, but homonyms are not involved.

Type 7: Multiple classification
e.g. What is the difference between a teacher and an engineer?
One minds the train, the other trains the mind.

In these riddles, there is usually a double homonymic-synonymic relationship in which the reclassification is explicitly required.

The following classification of riddles, elaborated by Opie and Opie (1959), was also employed in the description of the riddles:

Pattern A: True riddle
e.g. What goes up when the rain comes down?
An umbrella.

What goes in the water red and comes out black?
A red-hot poker.

What has yellow feathers and four legs?
Two canaries.

A true riddle is a composition in which some creature or object is described in an intentionally obscure way; the solution fits all characteristics of the description in question and usually resolves a paradox.

Pattern B: Punning Riddles
e.g. What runs but never walks?
A river.

What has teeth but cannot bite?
A comb.

These riddles involve a verbal duplicity which implies animate movement in an inanimate object or in which an inanimate object is made out to possess living members.

Pattern C: Wellerisms
e.g. What did the bull say when he swallowed the bomb?
Abominable.

What did the ground say when it began to rain?
If this goes on for very long, my name will be mud.

These questions are of the type to which answers are generally puns or cliché expressions.

Pattern D: Conundrums
e.g. What is the difference between a ball and a prince?
One is thrown in the air, the other is heir to the throne.

When is the door not a door?
When it is ajar.

What key is hardest to turn?
Donkey.

Why did the window-box?
Because he saw the garden fence.

These riddles contain double or single puns.

Pattern E: Catch riddles.
e.g. Why did the chicken cross the road?
He wanted to get to the other side.

Which boy in school wears the biggest hat?
The one with the biggest head.

The listener is led to expect an ingenious or far-fetched answer whereas a simple truth is stated in a hum-drum manner.

Following from this framework for the riddles, it seemed that a similar relationship between the ending or punchline and the antecedent events in the joke could be defined. The following definition of a joke was employed:

> A joke is an anecdote (story) with a punchline (ending) made arbitrary by the fact that the listener was expecting to be given conclusion A and was given B instead, but made systematic by the fact that conclusions A and B share another semantic or conceptual relationship.

An adequate structural understanding of the jokes then must specify the nature of the relationship between conclusions A and B. Examination of the jokes yields systematic relationships which can be defined by the following four categories. The examples used here are from the data. These were among the briefest examples, but have been shortened while trying to retain some of the characteristics of the original telling.

1. Semantic redefinition
   e.g. A man meets a genie on the road, who promises to grant him any wish. The man does not believe the genie but says, "Okay, make me a chocolate malted." "Psst, you're a chocolate malted!"

The replacement of conclusion A with conclusion B follows from a semantic ambiguity in word, statement, or symbol. The response violates the intended meaning.

2. Redefinition of events
   e.g. Jesus is on the cross dyin' and he says, "Moses, Moses come here." Moses is coming through the guards. They cut off an arm and he keeps on comin'. Jesus is calling, "Moses, Moses, come here" and Moses keeps fighting his way through. The guards cut off a leg. Finally he makes it without the arm and the leg and says, "Yes, Lord, Yes." "I think I can see my house from here."

The punchline redefines the significance of event A as B. The events satisfy both conclusions but the observed behavior does not match the intended.

3. Violation of taboo
   e.g. Jesus is blessing the animals from the cross. "God bless the pigs, the birds, God bless the cows, the horses. God bless the deer..." and whispers, "Moses, get out here! Beavers, psst, come here Moses!... God bless... Damn those beavers!"

The joke contains no verbal duplicity or hidden redefinition of behavior. The point of the joke defines a violation of a shared understanding of sanction and taboo.

4. Shared attribution
   e.g. An Englishman, a Scotsman and a Ukranian were going to see who could stay in a pig pen for three hours. The Englishman stayed two hours and came running out. The Scotsman went in and after two and a half hours came running out. Finally the Ukranian went in and half an hour later, the pigs came running out.

The joke contains no verbal duplicity or hidden redefinition but, rather, depends on the shared attribution of a quality to a representative of an identifiable group.

Structural types 1, 2, and 3 are oppositional categories, whereas 4 is not necessarily. Four is usually an intensifier which provides enough of a given quality to make the joke intuitively recognizable as a joke, i.e. being stupid enough by itself is laughable. Categories 1 and 2 are mutually exclusive by definition, while 1 and 2 can logically co-occur with 3 and 4. However, for purposes of this description, all categories will be defined as a type 3 or 4 only if neither 1 nor 2 are present. The categories defined in this way can be ordered from most to least specifically oppositional. Categories 1 and 2 are, however, different order categories than are 3 and 4.

Though these categories may seem adequate to the description of the structure of the jokes, they provide no actual information about the content: the events, the situations and behaviors which these jokes are about. Because content is particularly clear in the jokes told by 13 year olds, the author began the description of content at this level and worked down through the 13 and 9 year old data and then through the riddles.

The joke has already been defined as an anecdote in which two sets of expectations intersect. These perceptions of the two sets of expectations are based on both the joke-teller's and the listener's ability to share predictions and expectations which arise on the basis of the contextual features of the joke; i.e. given the description of a sequence of events, the predictions of consequences are similar. Three features are thought to define the content of the jokes:

> 1. The Context: This is the broadest conception of what the joke is about and specifies the nature of the understandings which must be shared in order to understand the joke. It might be conceptualized as the broadest common denominator of understanding on the basis of which a framework of expectations is built.
>
> 2. Descriptive Quality: The second element of joke content is the characteristic of an actor in the joke acting within the context which makes him or her the point of the joke. It is the specific quality about which a comment is made within the joke.
>
> 3. Comment or Statement: The third element of content is the comment made within the joke which is an emotional and valuative statement about someone possessing that quality while acting in the given context.

e.g. Have you heard the one about the Ukrainian who went hunting?
He followed the tracks and got run over by a train.

This joke is of structural type 2: a redefinition of the word "tracks" is required. The context is one of hunting: following tracks is understood within the context of hunting. The quality which makes the hunter the butt of the joke is his stupidity explained by virtue of his being Ukrainian. Having designated the actor as a member of an ethnic group, the comment made in the joke is one of disparagement of that group.

It is necessary to clarify the development of these categories. These were the eventual result of about 20 hours of discussion between the author and two other people who also consulted a third for further clarification. The jokes were read by these people individually and as a group in order to obtain a broader understanding of them than would be obtained by anyone working alone. The initial aim was to specify aspects of the joke which were necessary to the understandings of these jokes. The subsequent questions posed aimed at discerning how these specific understandings necessary to the comprehension of specific jokes paralleled each other in different jokes; that is, the questions were of the type "What in jokes A and B is necessary in a similar way?"

This section will provide a description of the riddles and jokes according to the categories whose development was presented in the preceding section. First, the description of riddles told at each age level and a comparison between ages, and subsequently a description of the jokes told at each age level and a comparison between ages will be presented. Finally, the limitations of this approach will be discussed.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE RIDDLES AND JOKES BY AGE

Riddles Told by Five Year Olds

The most immediately apparent feature of the protocols of the 5 year olds is the absence of jokes. In response to "Do you know any jokes and funny stories?", the children told riddles only. The riddles toldy by these children are a combination of actual riddles which satisfy the Sutton-Smith definition and attempted riddles which contain recognizable approximations of the features outlined in the Opie and Opie definitions of riddling patterns which have been described in the previous section. The Opie and Opie scheme allows classification in the absence of a systematic conceptual relation between expected and provided answers. The following table details the results of applying the pattern and type descriptive categories to the riddles told by five year olds.

TABLE I

RIDDLES TOLD BY FIVE YEAR OLDS DISTINGUISHED BY PATTERN AND TYPE

Category	Type 1 (Pre-rid)		Type 2 (Imp. Re-cl)		Type 3 (Rid-par)		Type 4 (Non-Cr. As)			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pattern a (True)	16	20.7	5	6.5					21	27.3
Pattern b (Punning)			3	3.8					3	3.8
Pattern c (Wellerism)	11	14.3					4	5.2	15	19.5
Pattern d (Connundrum)	2	2.6	15	19.5					17	22.1
Pattern e (Catch)	10	13.0			9	11.7			19	24.7
Other	2	2.6							2	2.6
Total	41	53.2	23	29.9	9	11.7	4	5.2	77	

By these criteria, of the 77 productions, 46.7% are actual riddles and 53.2% are approximations. Elaboration of the proportions of pre-riddles and actual riddles within each pattern is necessary. The children were able to tell actual conundrums with proportionately greater success than any other pattern. Actual conundrums constitute 19.5% of the riddles told, while the approximations of this form constitute 2.6%. These riddles are of structural type 2, requiring an implicit reclassification of the object in question: e.g. Why did the little boy put his father in the fridge? Because he wanted some ice-cold pop. The children telling the pre-riddles in this pattern are able to formulate a potentially appropriate question but neglect the necessary reclassification and provide a realistic answer instead: e.g. How come the little girl peeked out the window? Because she wanted to see if the stars are out yet.

The catch riddle was approximated slightly more frequently than told successfully: 13% type 1, 11.7% type 3. The puzzling question and mundane answer form is only clearly distinguishable within context if one is familiar with riddling: e.g. If you threw a red rock into the blue sea, what would happen? It would get wet. The following appears to be an approximation of this form: How come the cow was on the railroad track? Because the train wanted to get past her. It appears that an idiosyncratic rather than mundane answer is provided.

The children were able to tell actual Wellerisms and true riddles with relatively less success. Of the riddles, 5.2% are Wellerisms which are of structural type 4 (non-criterial relationships) and another 14.3% are approximations of Wellerisms. The Wellerism is characterized by a more of less unlikely exchange between two parties which employs a play on a cliche or a common statement, e.g. What did one curtain say to the other? Let's get together tonight. In the attempted Wellerisms, the children are able to generate the question-answer pattern including the common statement, i.e. you're too small, you're too young to light a fire, but are unable to execute the word play.

Of the riddles told, 6.5% are true riddles and another 20.7% are pre-riddles of the same type. The true riddle form, e.g. What's black and white with a cherry on top? Police car, presents an obscure description which usually involves a seeming paradox. The pre-riddle takes the following form: What has 10 wheels and can't even walk? A flying saucer, which presents an idiosyncratic answer to a puzzling question. A very similar pattern, the punning riddle, constitutes another 3.8%, e.g. What has four wheels and flies? A garbage truck.

The children attempted to guess the answers to 58% (n=21) of the actual riddles. In response to 3 of these, more than one guess was made. Of these guesses, 38% (n=14) were non-riddle type answers, that is, answers which were idiosyncratic or ignored necessary word play and were similar to the answers provided in the pre-riddles. The children attempted to guess the answers to 36.5% (n=15) of the approximations. In 80% (n=12) of these instances the children made at least two and up to five guesses.

Riddles Told by Nine Year Olds

The nine year olds told a total of 66 riddles. Of these, 62.1%

were traditional riddles according to the Opie and Opie patterns and amenable to classification according to structural type. The Opie and Opie pattern distinctions are dropped at this level, since they were most useful to the classification of pre-riddles which do not appear at this age. Three additional riddles patterns are identified which do not appear among the riddles told by 5 year olds. The following table presents the incidence of occurrence of each pattern and type.

TABLE II

RIDDLES TOLD BY 9 YEAR OLDS DISTINGUISHED

BY PATTERN AND TYPE

	Traditional		Ethnic		Parodies		Def'n/Spelling		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Type 2 (Imp. Re-cl.)	27	65.8	4	6.0	4	6.0			35
Type 3 (Rid. Par.)	4	9.8							4
Type 4 (Non. Cr. As.)	8	19.5	1	1.5					9
Type 5 (Exp. Re.cl.)	1	2.4							1
Type 6 (Non. Cr. Cl.)	1	2.4							1
Other					6	9.0	10	15.1	16
Total	41		5		10		10		

Sixty-five per cent of this group of traditional riddles is of type 2, requiring an implicit reclassification. Of the remaining, 9.8% are of type 3, defined as riddle parody, 19.5% are of type 4, defined by a non-criterial association, and 2.4% are of each of structural types 5 and 6, requiring an explicit reclassification and a non-criterial classification respectively.

The remainder of the productions which are treated as riddles because they appear in question-answer form are a variety of types. The designation of an ethnic identity (Ukrainian) as an explanation of a quality (slow-wittedness, primarily) which is disparaged distinguishes 7.6% (n=5). These are of structural type 2 and type 4.

Parodies constitute 15.1%: 9% employ simple absurdities or type 2 structures, e.g. What is green and goes slam, slam, slam, slam? A four-door pickle. A variation on these riddles, commonly known as "elephant jokes", employing absurdities, constitutes a further 6% of the riddles.

The remainder, 15.1%, of the riddles are of two related types. These are puzzling and unexpected definitions and puzzling spellings. These range from: What has an O at the beginning, an O at the end, and a Hi in the middle? Ohio; to What three letters can drive you crazy? LSD. The definitions include: What is the definition of a fart? Nothing;and What is the definition of a volcano? Mother Nature blowing her top.

Riddles Told by 13 Year Olds

Of the 80 riddles told by the 13 year olds, 48% (n=38) are commonly recognizable "ethnic jokes; 20% (n=16) are commonly recognizable "elephant jokes", 11% (n=9) are riddles with sexual and scatological content, 6% (n=5) are parodies, 3% (n=2) are situational and 13% (n=10) are other.

The ethnic jokes are included in the riddle classification because they follow the puzzling question-answer format. The contexts vary markedly, but the riddles make a uniformly disparaging comment about an actor who is identified by an ethnic or racial designation. In 89% (n=34) of these riddles, the actor or group is identified as Ukrainian. One riddle identifies a black actor and another, one who is French.

The elephant jokes, which constitute 11% of the riddles, are told sequentially here as they normally are. These depend on simple absurdities with or without sexual or scatological referents. The heroic parodies which make up a further 6% (n=5) are of structural type 4, e.g. What's green and sings? Elvis Parsley. A further series making up 11% of the riddles is characterized by sexual and scatological referents which are of the following structural types: 3 type two, 4 type four, and 1 type five.

A group which cannot be characterized by a systematic referent is a group which is characterized by structural type 2 (n=3) and type 4 (n=2). Four remaining riddles are unclassifiable according to any categories developed here.

Comparison of Riddles Between Ages

The following table summarizes the percentage of riddles of each pattern at each age.

TABLE III

PATTERNS OF RIDDLES AT EACH AGE LEVEL

Patterns	5	9	13
Attempted	53.2		
Traditional	46.8	62.1	(16)
Defn/Spellings		15.1	
Ethnic		7.6	48
Parodies		15.1	26.3
Sexual/Scat.			11.3
Situational			2.5
Other			12.5
	n=77	n=66	n=80

Of the riddles told by the 5 year olds, 46.8% can be classified as traditional riddles of the designated structural types, while 62.1% of those told by 9 year olds are of the same type. The remainder of those told by the 5 year olds are pre-riddles or attempted riddles which are not amenable to structural classification, while the remainder told by the 9 year olds are riddles within the definition employed here, but are a variety of non-traditional types. Of the riddles told by 13 year olds, only 16% can be designated as traditional patterns, and most of these contain sexual or scatological referents which are absent in these riddles when told by 5 and 9 year olds.

There are similarities among the non-traditional riddles told by 9 and 13 year olds. Ethnic jokes occur at both ages. However, they are predominant at 13 years (48%) and only a small portion at 9 years (7.6%). The absurdities commonly known as elephant jokes make up 11% of the riddles at 13 years and 6% at age 9. The parodies constitute 6% at 13 years, and 8.9% at 9 years.

The inability to tell actual riddles consistently disappears by age 9 in this study. A large group of riddles told at this age are traditional riddles which are virtually identical to those told by the 5 year olds. However, the 9 year olds also tell riddles like those which predominate in the protocols of the 13 year olds. The reliance on linguistic ambiguities is less pronounced. Instead, greater appreciation of cultural nuances, ambiguities and stereotypes is necessary to understanding. The appreciation of absurdities like those in the elephant jokes and the parodies like that in: What is green and swims? Moby Pickle, requires familiarity with a greater range of cultural material and a certain comfort with the process of ordinary life and logic. The ethnic jokes, for example, require an implicit understanding of cultural stereotypes and variations.

Jokes Told by 13 Year Olds

The 13 year olds told a total of 72 distinguishable jokes. These jokes were classified according to structural type with the following results: 39% (n=28) are type 1, 36% (n=26) are type 2, 7% (n=5) are type 3, and 7% (n=5) are type 4.[1] A further 11% (n=8) are not amenable to this classificatory scheme. Of these, two are situational and the others indistinguishable.

The classification of content features are broadly summarized here and detailed in the subsequent section. Of the 72 jokes, 28% (n=20) are defined by a sexual context, 24% (n=17) are about authority relationships, 8% (n=6) are about religion. A further 19% were amenable to the proposed classifications, but cannot be characterized by a consistent context. Two of the jokes are spontaneous or situational and cannot be dealt with according to this scheme. A remaining 17% (n=12) are included rather arbitrarily in the listing of jokes rather than riddles because they do not follow a question-answer format but are also not amenable to this classificatory scheme.

Of the jokes, 28% (n=20) were about sexual role and behavior. The specific aspects of these which were necessary to the understanding of the jokes include conceptions of masculine and feminine roles in courtship and marriage, of privacy and selectivity or lack thereof in sexual relations, of sexual desire and the autonomy of male arousal, of male sexual mutilation and of sexual imagery. The descriptive characteristics by virtue of which males are disparagingly commented on or punished include drunkenness, adultery, deceit, lust, slow-wittedness, curiosity about feminine hygiene. Those characteristics which elicit positive or ambivalent comment include virility and unpunished arousal. Those characteristics by virtue of which females are disparagingly commented upon include sexual desire, and ignorance and anticipation of sexual threat. The females are either the agents of disparagement or disparaged when not passive. For this reason, female sexual activity occurs as a quality which draws comment, rather than a contextual feature.

---

[1] The definitions of all these categories employed in this section have been presented on pp. 63-65.

The second distinguishable context is one of authority relationships which includes 24% (n=17) of the jokes told by 13 year olds. These include significant adult (parent, teacher, priest)/child, military, religious and penal contexts of authority. Two more jokes in this group feature individuals of unequal but undesignated status. The qualities upon which positive comment is made in the adult-child context, that is, which are admired, are cleverness and bravado in the face of authority. Priestly piety is embarassed, and dishonesty and malice on the part of children is disparaged.

In the military context, deceit and anti-Semitism on the part of Germans is disparaged while bravado and individualism in the ranks elicits ambivalence or admiration. The fear of religious authority is disparaged in one joke, and the slow-wittedness of a Ukranian escaping imprisonment is disparaged in another.

A further 10% (n=6) of the jokes focus on a religious context. These include jokes which disparage qualities of religious reverence, irreverence, faith, futility of faith, and obedience. One joke disparages the "otherness" of Jews.

The remaining 19% (n=14) which are amenable to this classificatory scheme but cannot be characterized by a consistent context are of two types. Eleven per cent (n=7) are a series which is consistent in the designation of an ethnicity as a descriptive quality by virtue of which a comment is made. The contexts vary widely while the jokes consistently disparage a quality, primarily slow-wittedness, which is explained by a designation of Ukrainian, French, Chinese, or Scottish actors.

The second type (11%, n=7) cannot be characterized by any consistency of context or quality though they include, as do the vast majority of jokes, a disparaging comment.

Jokes Told by Nine Year Olds

Of the 32 jokes told by the 9 year olds, 78% (n=25) were amenable to the classificatory scheme. Of these, 22% (n=7) required an understanding of a commercial context. The disparaged qualities are slow-wittedness, trickery, and "otherness" designated as French. Two of the jokes in this group were told in two groups. All of these jokes are of structural type 1.

A second grouping (19%, n=6) of jokes is about monsters or ghosts. A positive comment on bravado is made in each joke. All of these are of structural type 2.

Of the remaining jokes (31%, n=10), three comment disparagingly on the self-centeredness or self-deceit of women. The others encompass a variety of contexts but make uniformly disparaging comments. Of these jokes, 7 are type 1, 3 are of type 2, 1 of type 3. One joke is indistinguishable as any of these types.

The remainder of the jokes (22%, n=7) are designated as such because they are anecdotal rather than interrogative. They include simple absurdities and parody.

Comparison of Jokes between Ages

Examination of the jokes told by 9 year olds and those told by 13 year olds reveals few similarities beyond a commonality of structural type. The jokes told by the 13 year olds are more variable in content features--contexts and descriptive qualities--even though the comments made and structural types are virtually identical. The contexts at 9 years old which are sex role-related are limited to fat, indignant ladies, whereas at 13 years old, they vary to include sexual imagery, voyeurism, menstrual taboos, etc.

Characteristics which are disparaged are similar. An interesting shift seems to occur in the jokes which make a positive or ambivalent comment. At 9 years old, these are jokes about monsters and ghosts and the actor is admired for his bravado. At 13 years old, these comments are about actors who defy authority of various types.

The representatives of this sampling of jokes from the 9 year olds is difficult to discern because they were more reticent in the joke-telling sessions than were the 13 year olds. Despite this reservation, the increasing range of cultural material employed in joking is consistent with the increasing range in riddling previously described.

LIMITATIONS OF THE DESCRIPTIVE MODEL

The differences between the riddles and jokes told by children at the various ages have been documented in the previous section. These differences cannot be reliably explained on the basis of this study which was intended not to explain but rather to describe the types of responses to the instruction to exchange favorite jokes and funny stories. It was argued in the Introduction that a classification of responses which systematizes various dimensions of the jokes and riddles would be useful to planning further studies. The objective in this chapter has been the development of a classificatory scheme whereby one might be able to specify the understandings which are necessary to the sharing of a joke.

The major difficulty with an approach of this kind is that encountered in posing the questions to be answered on the basis of the data. Starting with an essentially atheoretical approach and without a specific hypothesis requires one to address the regularities in the data as they are observed. The problem becomes one of establishing the limits of the significant regularities, i.e. how does one distinguish regularities that are critical to the description of the phenomena from those that are not, and the limitations of the classifications proposed.

This classification developed in two stages. First, in response to the question "What understandings are necessary to the sharing of each joke?", the features which appear critical to this shared understanding of each joke were identified. Second, in response to the question "What elements are necessary in the same way in the different jokes and riddles?", a systematization of these elements was established.

The four categories--structural type, context, descriptive quality, and comment--were arrived at subsequent to other attempts to systematize. At least three prior systems proved unworkable. The first was an attempt to specify content, thematic material, mechanism, sequence and pattern. The second specified characters, relationships, context, interaction, quality, result and mechanism. Both of these proved unworkable for a variety of reasons, but led to the formulations of the questions previously stated. At this point, it was possible to distinguish critical elements which in themselves were not sufficient but when understood in interaction appear to be sufficient.

The first systematization subsequent to the reorganization which resulted from the questions specified the following elements: content, quality, theme, structural type. Content was then recognized as a complex set of features rather than a category in itself. The specification of theme became inappropriate for similar reasons; the thematic statement is unclear without knowing something of the joke-teller's intention and is the result of the combination of various elements rather than an element in itself. Comment is a feature internal to the joke itself rather than of the joke in its context as is theme. Perhaps the clearest illustration of the difference specified derives from a consideration of ethnic jokes whose theme necessarily varies depending on whether or not teller and audience are members of the given ethnic group and whether they identified themselves and are identified by others as members. Within these jokes it is relatively easy to establish that the comment made about the actor identified by the ethnic designation is disparaging without knowing anything of the context in which it is told. Thus, it becomes evident that theme is a more complex category than is comment.

The descriptive framework developed thus far details some of the aspects of linguistic and cultural phenomena which are embodied in joking discourse. It tells us nothing of how or why these are the available aspects, or about whether or not inferences one might make about the attitudes expressed are accurate. Moreover, it is impossible to comment further on the embeddedness-activity functions of humor which were discussed in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER V: THE STRUCTURAL STUDY

The second question posed at the outset of the study was "What do the jokes and funny stories told by the children reveal about the world we share with them?". Answering this question requires a different scrutiny of the jokes and further reworking of the classificatory scheme previously elaborated for the description of the jokes. The question posed here is considerably more complex and requires an analysis that reveals the presence or absence of a cohesive representation of the social order embedded in the jokes. It has previously been argued that the joke is a social form of which recognition and understanding develops gradually (Wolfenstein, 1954). Further, it is suggested that joking serves as one of the means of sanctioned disorder which occurs on various levels of organization. The child's early play with language and logic, Helmers (1965) suggests, allows the momentary suspension of the order and its subsequent re-emergence. Douglas (1968), in studying jokes and their relation to other rituals, likewise suggests that joking is permissible disruption which is congruent with the social order. She hypothesizes that "the joke is seen and allowed when it offers a symbolic pattern of a social pattern occurring at the same time... If there is no joke in the social structure, no joking can appear (p. 366)."

After Freud (1905) and Bergson (1924), having juxtaposed control and its absence, order and disorder, Douglas (1968) suggests a conception of a joke as an anti-rite:

> A joke has it in common with a rite that both connect widely differing concepts. But the kind of connexion of pattern A with pattern B in a joke is such that B disparages or supplants A, while the connexion made in a rite is such that A and B support each other in a unified system. The rite imposes order and harmony, while the joke disorganizes. From the physical to the personal, to the social, to the cosmic, great rituals create unity in experience. They assert hierarchy and order. In doing so, they affirm the value of the symbolic patterning of the universe. Each level of patterning is enriched by association with the rest. But jokes have the opposite effect. They connect widely differing fields, but the connexion destroys hierarchy and order. They do not affirm the dominant values, but denigrate and devalue. Essentially a joke is an anti-rite. (p. 369)

A variation on Douglas's argument suggests itself. Though the joke in its context can be understood as a disruptive element, as disordering, its introduction into an ongoing exchange is governed by various mechanisms which indicate that "This is a joke". The disruption is contained within a joke frame indicated by such markers as "Have you heard the one about... ", "There were three guys... ", or a change of posture, tone, dialect, etc.[1] The joke itself differs from nonsense precisely because it disorders in a comprehensible, systematic and non-random fashion: A disparages or supplants B in an intuitively recognizable manner. It appears that on both levels of organization the disorder is governed by certain implicit rules and, as a consequence, is a controlled disorder or disruption. Furthermore, it is argued that only selected aspects of social and personal experience are available to joking. Those aspects which are not available to joking are the essentially unquestionable elements of our experience, those which are seemingly so entirely natural that comment is either inappropriate or unimaginable. These essentially unquestionables would, however, vary between different groups. This argument bears certain similarities to Freud's analysis of joking but the differences are critical. Whereas a Freudian analysis locates the motivation of the joker in the psyche and the joke as the economic measure--saving an expenditure in ideation, emotion, or inhibition in the face of conscious control, this analysis directs the attention to the social condition, to the social reality from which jokes are a momentary means of controlled escape.

---

[1] This discussion is limited to the canned joke. Spontaneous joking bears certain similarities but also varies in significant ways. Spontaneous joking is less amenable to analysis because it is more highly context-dependent. The spontaneous joke cannot be abstracted and examined in itself as has been done here with the canned jokes.

The focus of this portion of the study is the examination of those elements of joking which might reveal the essentially unquestionables of this social order and the systematic disorderings of that social order. The relation between these must necessarily be examined since it is their relation, by definition, which reveals the existence of either category.

The approach to this level of analysis is initially suggested by the definition employed in the classificatory system previously developed. The joke was defined in Chapter IV as an

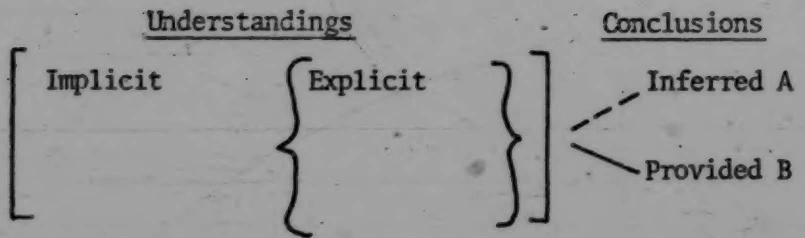
> anecdote (story) with a punchline (ending) made arbitrary by the fact that the listener was expecting to be given conclusion A and was given B instead, but made systematic by the fact that conclusions A and B share another semantic or conceptual relationship.

The immediate question is one of "What conclusion might be inferred and then, replaced by what outcome?" and the task becomes one of specifying these two conclusions: the inferred and the provided. However, in order to infer a conclusion, one must have enough information to make the appropriate calculation. The shared comprehension of the joke depends on some uniformity of the inference from the story given the information provided or, as previously conceptualized, on the commonality of understandings necessary to the sharing of the joke.

The sharing of the joke requires that the children understand certain dynamics of the interpersonal world on the basis of their own experience and observations and as represented to them in stereotypes, normative demands, mores, etc. Within the jokes, a context which requires certain shared assumptions and understandings and generates a set of inferences is more or less explicitly defined. The making of the point of this joke, i.e. the replacement of conclusion A by B, selects only certain features of context for comment even though understanding of all of these is necessary to the complete understanding of the joke. Those elements of context of which awareness is necessary but which remain implicit are not commented upon. They remain implicit, ordered and unquestionned understandings. Those understandings drawn directly into the violation and, therefore, commented upon, become explicit, disordered, and consequently questionable understandings. The specification of the necessary explicit and implicit understandings seems the step which is logically prior to the analysis of the inferred and provided conclusions since the latter derive from the former.

This approach suggests the possibility of a structural analysis of the jokes which eliminates the separation of content features and structural types, by providing an analysis in which the formal features are discernible through a detailed analysis of the content. The joke is understood as an empty form which is identifiable as a joke only insofar as its content is structured in identifiable ways. The separation of form and content is not meaningful since form does not exist in the abstract and content in the concrete. The two are inextricable.

The aspects of the joke which are the focus of this analysis can be schematized in this manner:



It is suggested that it is the specification of these elements and the analysis of the complexities of their inter-relation which will provide an insight into the social reality embodied in the jokes. The analysis of this inter-relation probably begins with specification of the provided conclusion from which the explicit understanding can be determined. The implicit assumptions then become discernible. Finally, one might elaborate the other conclusion(s) which could be inferred from explicit and implicit understandings. Further, it is suggested that jokes which have been characterized by different structural types in the previous classification will be seen to differ in the relation between the explicit and the provided and inferred conclusions.

Because the approach developed here is essentially inductive and atheoretical, no hypotheses about the social reality which would define the entry point into the analysis have been formulated. An entry point must be selected arbitrarily. Because the jokes which depend on the understandings of sex roles and sexual behavior are plentiful, easily identifiable and of particular interest to the author, these have been selected to determine the workings and fruitfulness of this approach.

THE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

Fourteen of the jokes told by the 13 year olds were identified by their sex role or sexual context. The analysis initially required the breakdown of each joke into discrete units of action or event.

For example: joke: 13: III: 37.

> There's this girl, she's a carpet girl, and she goes to a farmer to ask to borrow a broom. He says he doesn't have one, but she can go buy one. He says, "Sweep there, but beware of my son." So she goes in the barn, but forgets to lock, he told her to lock the door. She's sweeping and someone comes in. He says, "Look what I can do with my hands and my lips." She's goes running around, screaming and yelling and hollering. The next day she stayed and he came in. She forgot to lock the door. She says, "Well, I'm not going to scream this time." He goes, "Look what I can do with my hands and my lips." She goes running around the barn. The third day she says, "I'm going to see what he can do with his hands and his lips." So he comes in and says, "Look what I can do with my hands and my lips." And she stayed

CANADIAN THESES
ON MICROFICHE

44740

THÈSES CANADIENNES
SUR MICROFICHE

AUTHOR/AUTEUR

GRECKOL, S.R.

TITLE/TITRE

A DEVELOPMENTAL STUDY OF...

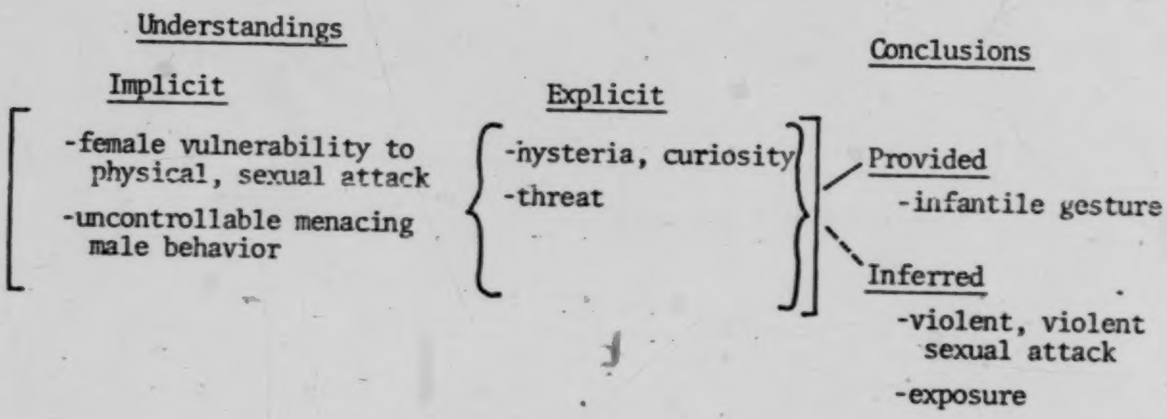
there, and he goes, "Br-br-br-br-br."

The breakdown is:

farmer hires		
	a carpet girl	
with a warning about his son		
	forgets to lock the door	
		son chases her, saying, "Look what I can do with my hands and my lips."
	runs away frightened and screaming	
		he leaves
	second day, forgets to lock the door	
		son chases her, repeating "Look..."
	runs away frightened	
	third day, "I'm going to see what he can do with his hands and lips."	
		son comes in, repeats "Look... "
	does not run away	
		Br-br-br-br-br

It is apparent immediately that the girl is under threat as indicated initially by the warning of the father and subsequently by the menacing behavior of the son. The conclusion that might be inferred from the initial outline is one of a violent attack, a violent sexual attack, or exposure. Instead, the son performs an infantile gesture. The girl's anticipation of threat, her forgetfulness, her hysteria, then her curiosity appear ridiculous in the light of the provided conclusion. Most broadly, the credibility of the warnings, the seeming threatening behavior, and the girl's response are contingent on the understanding of the particular vulnerability of the female. She must be understood as vulnerable in order for the subsequent events to be meaningful but is then disparaged first for her hysteria, then for her curiosity which is met with a harmless infantilism. If the sweeper were male, the joke could not exist as a joke, except perhaps if one could engender anticipation of homosexual rape. The fear on the part of the male would likely be expressed in a defensive posture and not in the seeming ridiculous hysteria.

This joke would then fit the analytic categories as follows:



Understandings

Implicit
- -female vulnerability to physical, sexual attack
- -uncontrollable menacing male behavior

Explicit
- -hysteria, curiosity
- -threat

Conclusions

Provided
- -infantile gesture

Inferred
- -violent, violent sexual attack
- -exposure

The infantile gesture redefines (disorders and re-orders) the significance of the threat and of the hysteria but the implicit assumptions of vulnerability and uncontrollable menace remain unquestioned thus not challenging a particular view of the realities of the relations of male and female to each other and to the world. In the remainder of this section, the analysis of each joke will be presented.

13:I:16:M

> Oh, and this little moron, this little moron, he worked on a farm you know, he worked on this farm and he was out driving the tractor and plow, and all of a sudden he sprung a rod, you know, and he couldn't get rid of it, he's tryin' and he couldn't get rid of it, you know. So he stopped the tractor and goes out to the boss and he says, "Boss, I gotta rod and I can't get rid of it." He says, "See that... over there. Take a shovelful of that, go down to the barn, stick it in there and that'll do it." you know. So he takes a shovelful and he... the barn and he meets the farmer's daughter while he's carryin' this shovelful, and she says, "Where are you going, lil moron?" He says, "Well, can't tell you, can't trust myself." She says, "Aw, come on," and she keeps buggin' him to say, "I guess, well I'm goin' over there and I'm gonna well, I gotta rod and I can't get rid of it so I'm going over behind the barn and I'm gonna stick my, stick it in there, you know, the boss says that'll take it away." So she says, "Oh, I got a better idea, little moron, come with me." So they go around the barn, she strips down, spreads her legs, and says, "Ok, little moron, put it right in there." He says, "Do you want a little bit or a whole shovelful?"

Little moron jokes are a particular genre frequently told by children. Generally, the moron's complete absence of understanding or his total naivete allows him to perform all manner of faux pas which embarrass or disparage others.

In this joke, the little moron does not recognize that the farmer's daughter is offering intercourse as relief for his troublesome erection. He offers her either a little bit or a whole shovelful of whatever the farmer recommends as a remedy for his erection without any explanation of how this remedies his condition. In so doing, her initiative in offering intercourse is disparaged. He is already the fool; his antics serve to make her foolish also. She, however, is foolish because she offers herself. His earlier hesitancy about telling her the problem indicates that he has some understanding of sexual encounters--he does not trust himself. He recognizes her sexuality; it is her initiative which he does not recognize. The joke can be schematized as follows:

Understandings		Conclusions
Implicit	Explicit	Inferred
- autonomy of male arousal	- daughter's sexual desire and initiative	- intercourse
	- moron's helplessness and naivete	Provided
		- confusion: a little bit or all

The understandings which are explicitly required result in the provided conclusion. The confusion is a result of his naivete and her initiative. The conclusion which is provided is in opposition to that which might be inferred if the moron were less naive: intercourse/not intercourse.

13:III:26

> In the paper it said that five men were wanted for raping a girl. The next day, ten Ukrainians applied for the job.

The conclusion provided presents rape as a desirable activity, i.e. one for which one might apply. Though the rape is explicitly defined as a crime, the logic of the joke requires an understanding that the pleasure derived might supercede the sanctions. A conclusion which might be inferred, also following from the slow-wittedness of the Ukrainians, is "The next day, 10 Ukrainians left town," or "The next day 10 Ukrainians turned themselves in," of "The next day, 10 Ukrainians who applied for the job were placed under surveillance." These conclusions would, however, destroy the conjunction of slow-wittedness and sexual desire, and would require the unequivocal recognition of rape as a punishable crime. The conclusion provided follows from an implicit acceptance of the coercion of female sexuality which condones rape. This implicit acceptance is not challenged. The designation of the applicants as Ukrainians simply attributes the acceptance of rape to "others".

The joke can be schematized as folows:

Understandings		Conclusions
Implicit	Explicit	Inferred
- coercive sexuality	- a rape occurs - Ukrainian slow-wittedness (wanted) - Ukrainian sexual desire	- rape as crime: a. 10 Ukrainians leave town immediately b. 10 Ukrainians turn themselves in c. 10 Ukrainians apply for the job and are placed under surveillance
		Provided
		- rape as pleasure: 10 Ukrainians apply for the job

The provided conclusion follows sequentially from the explicit understanding. The disorder follows from the slow-wittedness, and is defined by the semantic ambiguity of "wanted for the crime." This ambiguity creates a meaningful opposition, the disordering, only if ambivalent attitudes toward the status and punishment of rape are understood. The ambivalence toward rape follows from assumptions of coercive sexuality about which no comment is made.

13:III:23:7

> There were these two Indians and one Ukrainian, and they were walking in the forest, and this one Indian sees this cave, so he goes running up. He went "woo, woo" and hears back "woo, woo" and takes off all his clothes and runs in. So they are walking along and another Indian comes walking along. Then this other Indian who was there at first sees this cave and goes running up and goes "woo, woo" and hears back "woo, woo" and takes off all his clothes and goes running in. Then the Ukrainian is thinking, "What are these guys doing, they must be pretty stupid or something." So he asks the other Indian, and says, "What are these guys supposed to be doing?" "Well," he says, "if you go 'woo, woo' and you hears 'woo, woo' back, that means that there's a naked Indian maiden in there." So they are walking along and the Indian sees this cave and runs up and says, "woo, woo", so he takes off all his clothes and runs in. Then the Ukrainian says, "Well, I gotta find myself a cave." So he goes walking along, and finally he sees a cave and he hears "woo, woo" and so he takes off all his clothes and runs in. The next day in the paper the headlines read: Naked Ukrainian Run Over by a Train.

Understanding the provided conclusion requires an understanding of ethnic jokes as a genre, or the stereotypic slow-wittedness of Ukrainians: this one mistook a tunnel and a train whistle for a cave in which a naked maiden lay waiting. The understanding of the sexual availability of this maiden remains implicit. It is not defined as prostitution, but a sexual practice attributable to "others", in this joke, Indians. Also remaining implicit is an understanding of the indiscriminant nature of male sexual desire, i.e. any maiden lying naked in a cave is satisfactory. This joke can be schematized as follows:

Understandings		Conclusions
Implicit	Explicit	Inferred
- female sexual availability	- Ukrainian slow-wittedness (cave)	- sexual encounter
- male indiscriminant desire	- sexual desire	Provided
- Indian sexual practice		- death:tunnel

The provided conclusion is a consequence of those attributes which are explicitly required understandings. His being killed is a consequence of his sexual desire and his slow-wittedness. The conclusion that would be inferred if the actor were not slow-witted would be one of sexual encounter. His sexual desire and the availability of the Indian women remain implicit; their order is preserved. It is not his desire, simply his slow-wittedness, which creates the disorder. In this joke, the provided and inferred conclusions are not oppositional.

13:I:20:M

> There's this wife and she had four kids, you know, and she didn't want to get pregnant no more and her husband didn't believe in birth control, you know, so she went out and she bought 'em a couple, she wanted to buy him some sheiks, you know, they were all out so she says, "Oh well, I guess that's ok," so she goes home and, you know, and two months later she goes to the doctor and he says she is pregnant, you know, and she says, "But that can't be, you know, I gave him a sheik!" The doctor says, "Well, did you find one, what store did you buy it at?" She says, "The grocery department."

This joke provides a conclusion made comprehensible by the explicit statement that although the woman did not want any more children, her husband did not believe in birth control, and in the implicit understanding that abstinence was not acceptable. The woman has attempted to prevent pregnancy, but is unsuccessful through her own ignorance and disparaged for it. These follow from the implicit assumptions of female responsibility and male irresponsibility for conception. The husband is not disparaged for not believing in birth control, nor for not noticing that the measures taken were inadequate. The joke can be schematized as follows:

Understandings		Conclusions
Implicit	Explicit	Inferred
- contraception: female responsibility male irresponsibility	- contraception: ignorance of mechanics of belief in	- male discovers errors - accident
		Provided
		- error resulting in pregnancy

The provided conclusion follows from a violation of the explicit understanding of what mechanisms do and do not prevent conception. In this joke, the explicit understanding and the provided conclusions are oppositional. The implicit understanding is not disordered in any way, as the woman is the partner held responsible and punished for her ignorance.

13:III:49:7

> There's this new store being built, a Safeways store, the top floor was being built, you know, and there's no washroom or anything, you know. So there's this lady goes in and gets some wieners so she comes out with wieners... So there's this guy had to go pee upstairs so the guy opens the window and so he pisses out the window and there's this glass, you know, a sharp edge, he fell and it landed in the bag which the lady was holding which had the wieners. And she goes home, she cooks all the wieners, you know, and she comes back the next day, she says, "Did you have any more of those good wieners you had yesterday?"

In this joke, the conclusion, that is the woman's request for more good wieners, is understood only if the penis-wieners equivalence is recognized. From the actual telling of the joke, one must infer that it was his penis that was cut off because it is never explicitly stated. The woman's ignorance and possible malice allows her to return wanting "more of those good wieners", when one might expect her to be regretful or apalled by the misfortune. Her satisfaction is juxtaposed against an unstated horror of genital mutilation. The joke can be schematized as follows:

Understandings		Conclusions
Implicit	Explicit	Inferred
- penis=wieners	- male genital mutilation	- regret, abhorrence
- horror of genital mutilation	- female ignorance, malice	Provided
		- satisfaction

In this joke, the provided conclusion does not follow directly from the behavior or event of which explicit understanding is necessary.

Two sets of events intersect in this joke; the intersection provides the conclusion. Regret or abhorence might result from learning of genital mutilation. Instead, the two sequences have intersected on the basis of an implicit equivalence:

Explicit

mutilation ⟶ abhorence, regret

food ⟶ satisfaction

becomes:

$$\left.\begin{array}{l}\text{mutilation}\\ \text{food}\end{array}\right\}\ \text{penis=wieners}\ \left\}\begin{array}{l}\text{satisfaction}\\ \text{good/bad food}\end{array}\right.$$

13: III:50

> There's this new motel and this guy he had to go to the bathroom really badly from... and he went around and asked the desk lady, "Where's the men's can?" "Oh, we haven't built it yet, you'll have to use the ladies' can," and she says, "Don't touch any of those buttons!" And so the guy goes walking in there and he's sitting there and he's anxious. "Hmm, I wonder what those are?" He's suspicious, and so he pushes the first one and there a flood sort of comes out and it comes up to his ass, he's sitting on the toilet, it comes up to his ass. And then he presses the next button and this light spray comes up and cleans his ass, you know. "Oh, it feels so good," and he says, "What's this third button?" and so he presses it. This big powdered puff thing comes out and it wipes his ass and it goes back in and he sees this button that says ATR. "Hmm, wonder what that's for," and so he presses it. And so the next day he wakes up and he's in the hospital and he says, "Nurse, what happened?" "Well," she says, "You remember that you went into that can and that lady told you not to touch any of those buttons?" And he says, "Yeah." "And you pressed the one that said ATR?" And he says, "Yeah, what was that for?" "Aw, that's the automatic tampax remover; if you're looking for your dink, it's under your pillow."

The mutilation of the man's genitals which is callously announced by the nurse follows from his having ignored explicit instructions forbidding experimentation with the technology of feminine hygiene when he is forced by circumstance to use a women's toilet. This toilet is a wonderland of mysterious technology which provides all sanitary needs. These are only understandable if one understands that the female genitals require special care by techniques which are kept discreetly unknown and mysterious to men.

A conclusion which might be inferred is one of a pleasurable exploration ending in "Hmm, that's nice!" This conclusion would, however, have made the initial warning of the desk lady superfluous and would have explicitly defined the mysterious and feminine as pleasurable. Instead, the exploration which begins cautiously, becomes pleasant, then leads to severe punishment for the transgression. Both the warning and the explanation of the consequences are delivered by unsympathetic women. The peculiarities of feminine hygiene remain mysteries guarded by women. This joke can be schematized as follows:

Understandings		Conclusions
Implicit	Explicit	Inferred
- mysterious nature of feminine hygiene	- prohibition of exploration	- pleasure
	- male curiosity	Provided
	- female callousness	- punishment: mutilation

The punishment follows from the explicit warning. The curiosity derives from the implicit understanding of the strict segregation of toilet functions and the requirements of discretion. In this joke, the provided conclusion is a consequence of the explicit understanding. The conclusion which might be inferred but which is precluded by the implicit understanding is in ppposition to the provided conclusion: pleasure/punishment.

13:III:36:M

> There's this guy and these three salesmen and he came and there was no room in his house so they had to sleep in the barn and the first guy had to sleep with the cows, the second guy had to sleep with the pigs, and the third guy had to sleep with these 12 daughters. And so then this guy says, "So how did you sleep?" to the first guy. "Oh, I slept like a cow." And the guy says to the second guy, "How did you sleep?" "Oh, I slept like a pig." And he asks the third guy, "How did you sleep?" And he says, "Aw, I slept like a rabbit, jumping from hole to hole."

This joke provides a series of equivalences which set the pre-requisites for the punchline. The men are sent to the barn where they are to sleep with the livestock: the cows, the pigs, the daughters. The response to the query about how they slept generates an expectation of an analogous reporting: "slept like a cow," "slept like a pig," but the third category is replaced: cows=pigs=daughters becomes cows=pigs≠daughters but cows=pigs=rabbits. This replacement is not arbitrary, it is contingent on the understanding of rabbits and men as sexually active and virile.[1] Understanding the sexual signification, made explicit by "jumping from hole to hole" is necessary to the internal logic of the joke. The equivalence becomes daughters=holes. The sexual availability of the daughters follows from the equivalence of cows, pigs, daughters as livestock, not as humans. Continuing with "slept like a woman" is a logical impossibility. If women=livestock, then men=women cannot follow. Rabbit=man by virtue of a common feature, i.e. virility. This joke can be schematized as follows:

---

[1] See Leach (1964, p. 50). Leach traces the etymological changes in meanings and associations of "rabbit" and "cunt".

Understandings		Conclusions
Implicit	Explicit	Inferred
- stock of the farm: cows=pigs=daughters	- virility	-"slept like a woman" men=women
- sexual availability of daughters		Provided
		- "slept like a rabbit" men≠women men=rabbits

The provided conclusion follows from and is a consequence of the attributes defined by the explicit understanding. The conclusion which might be inferred but is replaced is in opposition to that provided, i.e. men=women:men≠women.

13:III:51:M

> There's these three guys and they're real hungry and they hadn't had anything to eat for about 2 weeks and they went to this old wrecked-up shack and so a witch was there. And so they went and they said. The witch was there and she said, "I'll give you no food unless you fuck me three times." And so the two guys say, "Aw, we aren't going to do it." And the third guy says, "I'll do it!" And so he goes inside there and her cunt's got steel wool on it and everything.

> And the guy grabs a cob of corn and he shoves it in and he's turning it around. And he's sittin' there and he does it and the witch is saying, "More, more, that feels so good " and he throws it out the window. Then he takes another hunk and he puts it in and then he does it again. "More, more, that feels so good!" and then he throws it out the window. Then he takes another hunk and puts it in and the witch is saying, "More, more, it feels so good!" And then he does it for about 15 minutes and she gives him a bunch of stuff to eat and he goes walking out there. The guy says, "Never mind about that, get back in there and keep chuckin' some more of that good corn with the sauce on it!"

In the conclusion, the enthusiasm of the two companions about the corn with good sauce on it is redefined as enthusiasm for food which is contaminated. The sauce is bad sauce because it is vaginal secretion. This conclusion follows from an understanding of the inappropriateness of the sexual demand of the old witch and the revulsion that her demand engenders. Her "witchiness" derives from age and inappropriate desire. Fulfilling her request is necessary because the hunger is great, but not great enough to overcome the revulsion which makes necessary the resourcefulness of the third man. The witch then derives her sexual satisfaction from mechanical vaginal stimulation and, in her ecstasy, does not notice that the obliging male is "sitting there". The recognition of the revulsion this woman engenders is the initial necessary understanding of the anomaly from which the rest of the joke follows. The joke could not follow from a description of a young and lovely woman.

It is necessary to explain why the two men who refuse sexual contact are punished by eating contaminated food while the one who is able to outwit the witch remains unpunished, uncontaminated. The two who are punished are the two who are unable to control their revulsion while the third is able to, and at the same time remains clever enough to satisfy the witch without contaminating himself. The men who cannot please and control the woman are punished by being controlled. This joke may be schematized in the following manner:

Understandings		Conclusions
Implicit	Explicit	Inferred
- female soliciting sex inappropriate	- revulsion and hunger	-a) punished: treachery discovered, do not get food.
- punishment of. avoidance of, or loss of control		-b) rewarded: given good food
		Provided
		- punished: contaminated food consumed

The understandings made explicit in the joke follow from implicit recognitions of the inappropriateness and the power of this woman; it is through her exercise of power that her inappropriateness is expressed. From this follows the explicit statement that the revulsion is greater than the hunger. The provided conclusion is a consequence of the inability to re-exert power over the woman. Two other conclusions can be inferred readily.

13:IV:26:M

> There's this big hotel you know, and this guy walks in and says, "D'you have a room for the night?" and he says, "All I have is one and my daughter is there," and she says, and he says, "I'll take it." And he goes up there and he thinks about the daughter and she's good lookin' and so he goes to bed with her and does everything to her that, you know, and then he says, "How much do I owe you

for that?" And then, "Oh, just five dollars." And the guy says, "Five dollars is all for that beautiful lay?" and she said, "Yeah." And he says, "I'll have to come back here again, a lay for five dollars." And he tells, this guy tells his brother that, you know, and the brother says, "Oh, I'll go there." And the guy goes there and says, "My brother was here before an' he said you had one room with your daughter here?" He says, "Right, yes, right up the stairs." And he goes up there and goes in the room and he does the same thing, you know, givin' her the works, and then he comes downstairs and says, "How much do I owe you for that lovely room?" And the guy says, "Twenty-five dollars." And the guy's brother says, "Twenty-five dollars! But my brother only had to pay five dollars!" And the man said, "Well, he was on TV and you were only on radio!"

13:I:17:M

Did you hear the one about the blue room? This guy, this travelling salesman comes into this town and goes to this hotel. "Can I have a room?" he says to the manager. The manager says, "All we have left is the blue room." He says, "Ok, I'll take the blue room." He goes upstairs, sees this naked broad lying in the bed just waiting for him. He closes the door, puts up the Do Not Disturb sign. He has a night! Goes downstairs, says, "How much do I owe you for that enjoyable night?" Manager says, "You don't owe us anything, we owe you 500 bucks," gives him 500 bucks. The guy just looks at him and walks out. Tells his friend about the room. Goes to the hotel and says, "Can I have a room? I'd like the blue room." He says, "I'm sorry, we don't have the blue room." He says, "Ok," goes out, comes back the next day. "Can I have the blue room?" Goes upstairs, there's the same broad waiting for him so spends the night, comes downstairs, says, "How much do I owe you for that night?" "Nothing, we owe you 50 bucks." The guy says "What? My friend got 500 bucks, how come I only get 50?" "Your friend was on television, you were only on radio."

The conclusion of each version of this joke requires an understanding of the rules of privacy and discretion operative in prostitution. The conclusion, which violates these rules, follows from the seeming triumph of having procured sexual favors unexpectedly and for a minimal fee in one version, or having been paid for the pleasure in the other. Understanding that this seeming triumph is passed on from the initial unsuspecting victim to a friend follows from understanding that sexual favors can be had with impunity and that this understanding is shared by other men. When the fee changes, the duplicity is discovered because the second man expects the same conditions as those had by the first.

Neither the prostitution nor the pornography are labelled as such. The transactions occur between the men who do not acknowledge the participation of the women who deliver the sexual goods. The discretion of the transactions serves to objectify the women entirely. In one version, the hotelman is providing his daughter: "There's only one room left and my daughter is in it." In the other, a blue room only is offered and the woman discovered. The joke can be schematized as follows:

Understandings		Conclusions
Implicit	Explicit	Inferred
- male privilege of buying sex	- prostitution: payment required, business; discretion privacy	- second leaves triumphant
- compliant female		Provided
	- buying:exploiting	- exploited for pornography or publicity
		- bought:exploited

The required implicit understanding that sexual services can be bought with impunity is not violated. The conclusion only violates the rules governing prostitutes as a business arrangement, i.e. there is no such thing as a good deal with no strings attached. The males having exploited women, thinking themselves exploiting a terrific deal, then find themselves exploited. Their exploitation follows essentially from their exploitation of the business arrangement or from their greed, not from their exploitation of the woman. In this joke, the explicit understanding and the provided conclusion are oppositional: (buyer) exploiter/(bought) exploited. A conclusion which might be inferred but which is precluded by the illusory "good deal" is one of the second male also leaving the hotel triumphant. This inferred conclusion and the provided conclusion provide the same oppositions.

13:III:25

> There's these guys and they caught these three guys and they say, "Ok, you gotta walk, just a sec, up these stairs, you know, and there's all these beautiful girls at the top, you know, taking their clothes off. You gotta walk up these stairs without popping a rod." And so the first guy goes walking up and about 25 stairs up he pops a rod and so the guy says, 'What's your Dad's occupation?" "He's a butcher." So he takes a butcher's knife and cuts off his dink. The second guy goes walking up and about 25 stairs up he pops a rod and he says, 'What's your Dad's occupation?" "He's a carpenter," so he takes a hammer and knocks it off. The third guy goes walking up and laughing his head off. He walks up and at the 98th stair he pops a rod and the guy says, "What's your Dad's occupation?" The guy says, "He's a popsicle maker, start suckin'!"

This joke immediately outlines a situation of dominance: three men held captive and required to execute a particular task. From this follows the rest of the joke which requires escape from punishment either by the successful performance of the task or by destruction of the dominance relation.

The understanding of the difficulty of the task set for the captives, i.e. walking toward beautiful women who are taking their clothes off, requires a particular understanding of the nature of male heterosexual arousal. The task is defined as a virtual impossibility which follows from an understanding that "provocation" is not in the eye of the beholder but in the body of the beholden.

If one cannot maintain control, i.e. avoid being aroused by the women, one can only escape the punishment of the loss of control/arousal by sheer acuity and cleverness. The acuity which provides the conclusion sets up a particularly interesting juxtaposition: on the one hand, provocative women and virtually inescapable heterosexual arousal and punishment, and, on the other hand, escape by homosexual encounter. However, that the third man should escape by the presentation of himself for homosexual arousal is logically consistent with the punishment of heterosexual arousal. He avoids being punished, maintains his masculinity, asserts his dominance by requiring his captor to assume the position of a woman, to give up his masculinity. His triumph derives from emasculating the one who threatens to emasculate. The emasculation is worse than the loss of control. This joke can be schematized as follows:

Understandings		Conclusions
Implicit	Explicit	Inferred
- male arousal	- punishment of male heterosexual arousal	-"Freeze it": emasculation
- female provocation	- dominance/emasculation	
		Provided
		- "Start sucking": avoidance of emasculation by emasculating

In this joke, the explicitly required understandings and the provided conclusion are oppositional: dominant-emasculating/ dominated-emasculated. The provided conclusion is a reversal of the relation specified. The conclusion which one might infer is also oppositional to that provided.

13:I:15:M

> There's this trapper, he made a million bucks on furs. Had 'em all piled up in a big half-ton to bring 'em all in. Gets into town and he hasn't been in town for 50 years, you know that, you know he's been out trappin' that long. He says, "Ah, I gotta go out on the town." So he goes to the bar, you know, and has a couple beers, and he goes to this apartment. It says "$15 a night" so he walks up there and says, "I'll have one room." You know, says, "You want a bear?" "No, I don't want no bear, I been hunting bears all my life, I don't want none of that." He says, "Ok," so he starts walkin' up, takes the elevator, goes up. Sees this nude chick running down the hallway and this guy chasing her, you know, he says, "How do you get that?" The guy says, "Well, didn't you order bear?" "Naw, I didn't know it was like that!" He says, "Well, go down and change it." So he goes down and says, "I want a bear right now!" "Well, that'll cost $10." So he puts 10 bucks down and he says, "It'll be at your door pretty soon." And he's carryin' his guns and everything and he goes up there and he sees this Negro girl sitting there, sitting beside his door, and he says, "You better get the hell outa there! I got enough buckshot here for a bear, never mind a coon!"

The joke requires an understanding of the slang animal-woman equivalences--"bear/bare", "coon", "chick"--on the basis of which the institution of prostitution is recognized. The trapper, unaccustomed to city ways, quickly learns the appropriate language. The non-human, animal status accorded women intersects with a racist rejection of a black woman as a desirable prostitute. The woman, not the racist, is disparaged within the joke. The joke may be schematized as follows:

Understandings		Conclusions
Implicit	Explicit	Inferred
- prostitution	- slang	- sexual intercourse
- dehumanization of female	- selectivity of the buyer	Provided
	- city ways	- racist rejection;

13:III:52:M

> There's this dame, this guy phones up this dame like her husband's out of town. And he phones her and he says, "Can I come over tonight?" And she says, "No, I'm bleeding." And so he phones the next night, "Can I come over tonight?" "No, I'm still bleeding." And so the third night he says, "Can I come over tonight?" "No, I'm still bleeding." So he says, "Well, here I'll come over tonight and I'll help you." And so he goes lickin' it all up, you know, and he spits it in the toilet and he goes over again and licks up a bunch and he spits in in the toilet. He licks a bunch off and he's got a mouthful and the doorbell rings and he goes and answers the door and her husband comes walking in and says, "What've you got in your mouth?" And the guy (swallows), says, "Ketchup."

This joke requires an understanding that swallowing menstrual blood is unacceptable, but less unacceptable than being found out as an adulterer. That the bleeding is menstruation must be inferred. That the woman objects to the man coming over because she is bleeding and never agrees to be "helped" requires implicit understandings of female acquiescence and male initiative, and of the internalization of the menstrual taboo by the woman. The menstruation is equated through the helping gesture to illness. The joke can be schematized in the following manner:

Understandings		Conclusions
Implicit	Explicit	Inferred
- female acquiescence	- swallowing blood	- does not answer the door, remains silent
- male initiative	- adultery, secrecy	Provided
- taboos on menstrual blood		- escapes detection of adultery

This joke has little internal logic; it manifests no real cleverness. It probably exists as a joke only as a simple violation of marital fidelity in a particularly forbidden fashion. To begin with, there is no rationale provided for answering the door with blood on his face. By contrast to the conclusion inferred in other jokes, nothing precludes the inferred conclusion in this one. The provided conclusion does not follow logically and systematically displace the inferred conclusion as it does in the other jokes.

Having presented the detailed analysis of the individual jokes, it is possible to examine the constellation of necessary understandings, both implicit and explicit, and the disordering of these, which are evident in this collection of jokes. The jokes which were selected for this analysis were those defined by their sexual context. This selection was somewhat arbitrary, but significant because it allows one to define a very vague boundary within which the required understandings are likely to range and allows the definition of a particular set of observations as more salient than others. This does not remove the need to account for various other observations, but simply provides an entry.

If one is attempting to ascertain whether or not there is a cohesive representation of a social world embedded in a collection of jokes, it seems appropriate to begin with an identifiable rather than a random collection. If one were to begin with a random collection, and find that the disorderings were unsystematic, one could not decide whether this was a function of the collection or inherent in jokes. If one begins with a cohesive set and finds random disorder, it is likely that this is a function of the nature of that type of joke and the understandings required.

In the introduction to this analysis, it was argued that those understandings which were necessary but which remained implicit were the understandings which were not disordered. These were termed the essentially unquestionables. Those understandings which were drawn from the implicit required understandings and were made explicit by virtue of their necessity to the point were the disordered features.

The task remaining is the elaboration of these two categories of required understandings. This elaboration should reveal which aspects of male and female sexual behavior are essentially unquestionable and which are available for disordering, and whether the disorder is cohesive or random.

It appears that there is a continuum of activity on the part of the women who are necessary to this collection of jokes. The points on this continuum which can be specified on the basis of this small number of jokes are objectified, acquiescent, vulnerable and controlling or vindictive. Those in which the women are necessary but in which they have no status as actors but are simply acted upon require an implicit understanding of the exchanges of women that go on between men. These include jokes I:17; IV:26; III:23;III:36. These are jokes in which the identification of a woman as a participant is necessary to the anticipated or desired action, which is sexual intercourse in each case, but in which all significant interaction takes place between the men who directly or indirectly provide the women. In III:36, the farmer sent the three men to sleep in the barn with the cows, pigs and daughters. In I:17 and IV:26, the man running the hotel has only one room left with his daughter in it, and the other has only a blue room left which turns out to have a "beautiful broad" in it. In III:23, there are naked Indian maidens lying about in caves. The participation of these women remains that of implicit availability.

A second series of jokes requires the understanding of women which is slightly less completely objectified, which has here been designated as acquiescent. The active exchanges once again occur between men with the acquiescence of women; there is no involvement of women except in III: 25. In this joke, beautiful women are taking their clothes off while the men are forced to walk toward them. In III: 52, the woman rejects the suggestion that the man visit initially, but he finally arrives without her assent and the joke essentially occurs between this helpful adulterer and the husband. In I: 15, the women are necessary because the context is one of prostitution, but are negotiated for and exist at the disposal of the men. The involvement of these women is somewhat different from that in the first group, but remains implicit. In both groups, their sexual participation is necessary to the context but the punchline or the point follows from a set of understandings made explicit but which have no connection with anything the women do. They are ground to the figures who are active. The punchline, the conclusion, does not follow from any explicitly defined attribute of the women. In both groups of jokes, the recognition of their sexual availability is necessary but remains implicit. The order defines two groups of people: the women who are acted upon; and the men who act upon them and interact with each other.

If one then moves to an examination of the structure of control in these same jokes, it becomes apparent that the women are necessary but marginal and it is their marginality which determines the object-like position they occupy. Though these jokes appear to be about prostitution, adultery, arousal, etc., which require sexually available women, they actually are about power and dominance among men. The men dominate, deceive, admire or exploit each other against a background of acquiescent women.

Qualities which are explicitly attributed to the men are the antecedents of the provided conclusions and, as such, are commented on. The only qualities attributed to these women are possibly attractiveness but always availability. This status is not acquired in any way, it is simply attributed by virtue of their being women.

The understandings of the sexual exchanges remain implicit, while the explicit understandings are of a different order. Prostitution, adultery, the nature of arousal are not questionned or disordered; it is only the rules which govern these which are violated or disordered within the jokes. For example, the men who think that they are on to a good sexual bargain are exploited because they are not sufficiently acute to have queried the anomalies, not because they went to a brothel.

In these same jokes, there appears to be an intersection of discretion and objectification. The actual sexual activities are not explicitly described, but must be inferred. Phrases like "does everything to her", "has a night", or "gonna find myself a cave" might possibly serve purposes of discretion but in so doing they obscure and hide the actual use which is made of the women.

Within this group of jokes, there is a series in which women are central rather than marginal, as previously described. In I: 20, a woman discovers she is pregnant because she was ignorant of effective contraception. In III:37, the lil moron does not recognize the sexual initiative taken by the farmer's daughter, and in III:37 , a carpet girl is threatened by the farmer's son. In each of these jokes, the central woman initiates some action, i.e. investigating contraception, offering sexual intercourse, confronting the menacing son, and is disparaged as a result. The disparagement follows from the particular vulnerabilities which these women explicitly expose in their actions. These vulnerabilites are based on implicit understandings of physical and sexual vulnerabilities which are specific to women, i.e. women tend to be physically weaker and become pregnant as a result of unprotected intercourse. These implicit understandings from which the explicit follow require broader understandings of the different relations of male and female to the cultural sexual order, which in these jokes appears as a natural order.

In a further series of three jokes (III:49, III:50, III:51), the women who are central rather than marginal are controlling, vindictive or inadvertently callous. These women are not explicitly disparaged or punished; the men with whom they interact are. Two of these jokes are about accidental genital mutilation. In both of these jokes, the women are neither responsible, sympathetic nor powerful. The joke in which the man who explores the woman's toilet loses his penis (III: 50) is interesting because it provides no basis for deciding whether he is punished for enjoying the experiences or for disobeying the explicit warning against exploration delivered by the "desk lady". Both the nurse and the desk lady independently deliver the same message, though they themselves do not interact.

However, in the third joke (III:25) in which the penis is lost, the loss is inflicted by men on men and the victim who escapes does so by reducing his captor to a female posture. The punishment of enjoyment seems the more plausible explanation because it is consistent with the nonequivalence/separation of men and women in III;36, with the punishment of loss of control in III:25, with the negotiation in III:52 essentially occurring between the husband and the adulterer and in spite of the woman's attempts to prevent the man from acting. The women in these three jokes then deliver the warning and the explanation but do not have any control over the action.

The implicit recognition of the separateness and powerlessness of the female world is reaffirmed. Consistent with this observation is that in the third joke (III:51) the disparagement or punishment of the two men follows from the action of the third, who maintains control, rather than directly from the action of the woman.

At the same time that the action in these jokes occurs primarily between the men, male sexuality and arousal are located in the passive female object. A repeatedly necessary implicit understanding is one of arousal occurring uncontrollably either in relation to women or autonomously; this sexual desire is continuous and indiscriminant.

The central question raised by the development of this structural model is the cohesion of the social model embedded in this collection of jokes. This question, however, contains within it a prior question: how the cohesion or lack of it in the jokes reflects the world shared with the children. This prior question requires a scrutiny of the analytic process whereby the cohesion is revealed.

The initial explanation sought is how the events and behaviors are mediated within the jokes themselves, and not one of how they are mediated in the culture and then reflected in the jokes. That is, seeking explanation within the cultural order is precluded and seeking explanation within the data is necessitated. Thus, the explanation is not read into a sequence because "we know it to occur in real life", but because this particular sequence is mediated in this relation in this joke. Though various jokes seemingly embody different symbolic behaviors, their significance must be sought within the logic of the jokes themselves.

Thus, a structural model, elaborated in the introduction to this chapter, was developed on the basis of the limitations of the descriptive model and of the repeated scrutiny of the jokes. The method subsequently consisted of examining the jokes and developing successively more encompassing categories of understanding. The significance of the understandings revealed is recognized only within the previously elaborated theoretical framework.

On the basis of this analysis of this collection of jokes, it seems clear that the disordering which is necessary to joking has systematic features. Against a backdrop of consistent implicit understandings, the explicit understandings are also consistent with each other, rather than contradictory. The central consistent implicit understanding required is one of the clear separation of men and women. Masculine and feminine attributes and action are both separated and circumscribed. Though initial examination seems to reveal certain inconsistencies--for example, in some jokes men are powerful and central, in others women seem to be--close analysis indicates that this simply is not true.

For example, although women appear to be vindictive and controlling, they do not in fact wield power. Even when women are seemingly powerful, the conclusions or consequences follow from actions or postures taken by men. This is consistent throughout the collection. Any generalization one might make on the basis of the analysis of this collection is, however, extremely tentative given the size of the collection. The value of the analysis resides not primarily in the actual generalization formulated but rather in its adequacy in explaining a particular collection and the applicability of this model to other collections of jokes.

The relations of order and disorder and of implicit and explicit understandings are those whose clarification seems to be significant for the analysis of the cultural categories embedded in the jokes, i.e. the joking categories. However, the relationship of these joking categories and non-joking cultural/psychological categories is ambiguous. This is a problem similar to that which occurs in the analysis of myths, and is discussed and illustrated by Lévi-Strauss:

> If a given mythology confers prominence on a certain figure, let us say an evil grandmother, it will be claimed that in such a society grandmothers are actually evil and that mythology reflects the social structure and the social relations; but should the actual data be conflicting, it would be as readily claimed that the purpose of mythology is to provide an outlet for repressed feelings (1963, p. 208).

The question which occurs in relation to the jokes is whether the punishment or disparagement of a given action is a repudiation of that category of action or a momentary release of the repression of that same category of action. The analysis developed here clarifies a portion of this problem because it creates a distinction between those understandings which are assumed and necessary but do not have immediate consequences, and those which do have immediate and usually negative consequences, the evaluation of which is unclear. For example, in the joke in which ten Ukrainians apply for the job of raping a girl, the understanding of coercive sexuality is necessary; it remains at the level of assumption, while the Ukrainians are disparaged for being slow-witted. Whether their slow-wittedness and indiscriminant desire is a direct reflection of stereotypes of and attitudes toward Ukrainians, or a repudiation of these attitudes is unclear. Making this distinction would require much more information about the identification and motives of the teller of the joke, and the cultural and socio-economic context which is unavailable. However, the implicit coercion remains an embedded understanding around which there is no question. Regardless of the evaluation of the act, the basic assumption remains just that; it remains a feature of embeddedness. Without these implicit understandings, the joke cannot exist; it becomes simple nonsense or absurdity instead.

CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Since this study was motivated primarily by a recognition of the inability to answer some fundamental questions about children's humor on the basis of previous psychological conceptions of joking, the conclusions to be elaborated necessarily focus on the adequacy of this approach and method to psychological studies (Koch, 1977) and to the developmental study of joking. The significance of this study conducted in the fashion of Levi-Strauss's bricoleur[1] probably lies less in the definitive statements about humor which one might wish to read than in the heuristic value of the approach and the analytic model. The approach results in a self-critical discourse which is suggestive rather than conclusive. Giorgi (personal communications) recommends one retain a diary record of the methodology developed for a given study.

It had been argued that the psychological hypotheses which one can formulate have been determined by certain conceptual and methodological constraints and, as a consequence, that the studies have yielded various insights which might become more meaningful if they become part of a major retotalization (Sartre, 1968; Brown, 1974) of the data necessitated by a more systematically self-conscious exploration of conceptualizations of complex human phenomena and the approaches to these same.

The comparison of the information yielded by the descriptive and structural models is significant. It is contended here that the sequence of analysis followed was necessary because the discernment and systematization of the descriptive categories made clear the inadequacies of that approach and focused the limitations which resulted in the reconceptualizations necessary to the structural model. The two approaches are, however, essentially discontinuous. The structural analysis cannot be derived from the descriptive analysis; i.e., the substantive categories cannot be altered to yield structural categories. The replacement of one conclusion by another is the central structural tension. This tension and its resolution can be identified by the descriptive categories, but cannot be explained by them, as these elements are the phenomenal manifestations of the underlying structures.

---

[1] The bricoleur works with the tools available. Wilden (Lacan, 1968, p.259) presents a helpful discussion of the self-critical function of this approach which allows one to use the tools at hand and requires them to be abandoned as they do not work.

The descriptive categories cannot be deepened as such, because they cannot identify the necessary relations which systematize the conclusions. Essentially they are elements which are identifiable and manipulable rather than structural categories which allow the inference and elaboration of antecedents, that is, specify the logic of the joke. They determine and are determined by the joke as a logical construction. This logic is, however, not independent of but rather mediated by schematizations made available as cultural objects. Both analyses yield information about the objects available as cultural categories of joking, but only the latter can yield insight into the relational nature of these categories.

The two approaches to the data provide information which is qualitatively different, and the objective in developing each analysis was quite different. In the case of the descriptive analysis, the objective was the characterization of the data. Consequently, the scrutiny of the data revealed categories which appeared necessary in the same way in different jokes. These four categories--context, quality, comment and structural type--seem to maximally systematize regularly recurring features. These regularly recurring features also appear to change with age. No hypothesis about the source of the change was advanced, because it seemed necessary to first ascertain the range of joking. This proves very interesting because the range of jokes yielded here is much greater than any of the selections of stimulus material employed in previous studies of the development of children's responses to humor. This range approaches the range that one would suggest exists on the basis of close contact with children of various ages. This study does not yield an actual taxonomy, but rather a set of inductive categories which require testing on another collection of jokes. Its value would seem to lie in the isolation of those elements which are seemingly adequate to the characterization of jokes and riddles.

On the other hand, the structural analysis was developed on the basis of a limited range of jokes for the reasons previously specified. This analysis developed from an attempt to answer a question of a very different nature. The pursuit was of an elaboration of a model whereby one could determine the understandings of the cultural surround on the basis of the joke. This required an analysis which derived information directly from the jokes, as opposed to one with a definitive set of questions about the world which were then answered on the basis of the jokes.

Having elaborated a theoretical model for understanding the relation between the joke and the culture, it was necessary to develop an analysis which might allow one to differentiate the required understandings in such a way as to allow a distinction to be made between those required cultural schematizations which are disordered and potentially disembedded from those which become further embedded, or potentially so, by virtue of their remaining undisturbed. These distinctions simply cannot be made on the basis of the descriptive analysis.

The conclusions one is led to in using the two different analyses are possibly different. Whereas the descriptive analysis of the jokes about sex roles would lead one to conclude that the jokes were about heterosexual behavior in which women are disparaged for initiative, sexual desire, etc., the structural analysis leads one to conclude that many of these same jokes are not about women at all. The women are simply part of the context in which men negotiate with each other. This indicates the difficulty in ascertaining the actual content of the joke on the basis of a descriptive approach which cannot adequately encompass the complexity of the joke even though it does seemingly characterize regularly recurring features. The distinctions which the structural model allows, however, must be contextualized, that is, located in relation to a further series of psychological and cultural structures.

The task of contextualizing this analysis is one of developing a broader model which sustains a cohesive understanding of the complexity of any given human phenomenon. The manifestation of any given behavior must be understood as the product of the intersection of complex structures. Though this has been recognized by many psychologists, it appears to be most systematically developed in the extensive work of the late K.F. Riegel.

Riegel (1976, 1978) contends that development must be understood as a succession of asynchoronies along four planes of developmental progression: the inner-biological, the individual-psychological, the cultural-sociological, and the outer-physical. He rejects the assumptions of stasis which are fundamental to much developmental theory, and demonstrates the necessity of understanding development dialectically using cohort analysis of intelligence and other complex human phenomenon.

> A dialectic theory of development is simultaneously concerned with relationships of change within the individual, with the relationships of change within the world, and with the relationships between the changing individual and the changing world (1976a, p. 394).

Two dimensions of Riegel's argument appear critical. First, that any given phenomenon must be simultaneously understood in its complex relation within the individual and within the world, and second, that the process of development is one of change which is continual but which cannot be understood via an understanding of discrete points along the progression. That is, identifying stages and their critical prerequisites, regardless of the size of the gradations between these, will not provide an understanding of the changes which occur because although change is continual, it is discontinuous. These requirements do perhaps burden the individual research project excessively, but they fundamentally necessitate less an abandonment of current approaches and methods than an elaboration of the fit of our psychological models within larger understandings of science and history.

If one were to locate this study within the framework of developmental progression elaborated by Riegel, it must be understood as a means of analyzing one moment of these dialectical relations. These jokes and riddles are understood as the products of the intersection of the individual-psychological asynchronies with the cultural-sociological, and are consequently an appropriate object of psychological study.

The approach and method allows one to discern the schematizations made available by the intersection of cultural-sociological and individual-psychological progressions. To extend the understanding a number of further explorations are necessary. If the jokes and riddles are understood as a product of the work of understanding and coping X cop~~y~~ing with one's relation to the world, then a detailed study of the understandings made available by virtue of membership in a given group is necessary. The humor of a given group must be understood in relation to the ideologies available to that group. Necessarily, these ideologies can only be understood if one understands the structural relation of that group to the larger order.

REFERENCES

Bateson, G. The position of humor in human communication. In J. Levine (Ed.), *Motivation in humor*. New York: Atherton Press, 1969.

Bergson, H. *Laughter: An essay on the meaning of the comic*. New York: Macmillan, 1924.

Berlyne, D. E. Laughter, humor and play. In G. Lindzey and E. Aronson (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology*. Vol. 3 (2nd. Ed.) New York: Addison-Wesley, 1969.

Bradney, P. The joking relationship in industry. *Human Relations*, 1957, *10*, 179-187.

Brown, P.M. *Toward a Marxist psychology*. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

Byers, L. To laugh is to know: A discussion of the cognitive element in children's humor. ERIC Clearinghouse, 1971.

Chapman, A. J. Humorous laughter in children. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1975, *31*(1), 42-49.

Church, H. *Language and the discovery of reality*. New York: Random House, 1961.

Coser, R.L. Laughter among colleagues. *Psychiatry*, 1960, *23*, 81-85.

Douglas, M. The social control of cognition: Some factors in joke perception. *Man*, 1968, *3*, 361-376.

Ding, G. F. & Jersild, A. T. A study of laughing and crying in preschool children. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 1932, *40*, 452-472.

Eysenck, H. J. Foreward. In J. H. Goldstein and P. E. McGhee (Eds.), *The psychology of humor*. New York: Academic Press, 1972.

Flugel, J. C. Humor and laughter. In G. Lindzey (Ed.), *Handbook of social psychology*. Vol. 2. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1954.

Fry, W. F. *Sweet madness*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Pacific Books, 1973.

Freud, S. Jokes and their relation to the unconscious. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960. (Orig. 1906)

Freud, S. Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety. London: Hogarth Press, 1960.

Freud, S. The ego and the id. London: Hogarth Press, 1949.

Getzels, J. W. & Jackson, P. W. Creativity and intelligence: Explorations with gifted students. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1962.

Georges, R. A. & Dundes, A. Toward a structural definition of the riddle. Journal of American Folklore, 1963, 76, 111-118.

Giorgi, A. Pyschology as a human science: A phenomenologically based approach. New York: Harper and Row, 1970.

Giorgi, A. Humanistic psychology and metapsychology. Pre-distribution copy of paper presented at Conference of Center for the Advanced Study of Theoretical Psychology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, October, 1976.

Greer, G. The female eunuch. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971.

Groch, A. S. Joking and appreciation of humor in nursery school children. Child Development, 1974, 45, 1098-1102.

Grotjahn, M. Beyond laughter. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957.

Hannerz, U. Soulside: Inquiries into ghetto-culture and community. New York: Columbia University Press, 1969.

Hauck, W. E. & Thomas, J. W. The relationship of humor to intelligence, creativity and intentional and incidental learning. Journal of Experimental Education, 1972, 40(4), 52-55.

Hetherington, M. E. Humor preferences in normal and physically handicapped children. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1969, 69(6), 694-696.

Hes, J. P. & Levine, J. Kibbutz humor. Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases, 1962, 135, 327-331.

Justin, F. A. A genetic study of laughter provoking stimuli. Child Development, 1931, 3, 114-136.

Keith-Spiegel, P. Early conceptions of humor: Varieties and issues. In J. H. Goldstein and P. E. McGhee (Eds.), The psychology of humor. New York: Academic Press, 1972.

Kenderdine, M. Laughter in the pre-school child. Child Development, 1931, 2, 228-230.

Koch, S. Language communities, search cells and the psychological studies. In W. J. Arnold (Ed.), Nebraska symposium on motivation, 1975: Conceptual foundations of psychology. 23. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1976.

Koestler, A. The act of creation. New York: Macmillan, 1964.

Kohlberg, L. Stage and sequence: The cognitive-developmental approach to socialization. In E. Goslin (Ed.), Handbook of socialization theory and research. New York: Rand-McNally, 1969.

Kreitler, H. & Kreitler, S. Dependence of laughter on cognitive strategies. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 1970, 16, 163-177.

Kris, E. Ego development and the comic. International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 1938, 19, 77-90.

Lacan, J. The language of the self: The function of language in psychoanalysis. New York: Dell Publishing, Inc., 1968. (Translated, with notes and commentary, by A. Wilden.)

La Fave, L. Humor judgments as a function of reference groups and identification classes. In J. H. Goldstein and P. E. McGhee (Eds.), The psychology of humor. New York: Academic Press, 1972.

Lauter, P. Theories of comedy. New York: Doubleday, 1964.

Leach, E. Anthopological aspects of language: Animal categories and verbal abuse. In E. H. Lenneberg (Ed.), New directions in the study of language. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1964.

Leiberman, J. N. Playfulness and divergent thinking: An investigation of their relationship at the kindergarten level. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 1965, 107, 219-224.

Levi-Strauss, C. Overture to le cru et le cuit. In J. Ehrmann (Ed.), Structuralism. New York: Doubleday and Co., 1970.

Levi-Strauss, C. The structural study of myth. Structural anthropology. New York: Basic Books, 1963.

Levi-Strauss, C. The savage mind. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Levine, J. (Ed.), Motivation in humor. New York: Atherton Press, 1969.

Maier, N. R. F. A Gestalt theory of humor. British Journal of Psychology, 1932, 23, 69-74.

McGhee, P. E. Cognitive development and children's comprehension of humor. Child Development, 1971a, 1971b, 42, 123-138.

McGhee, P. E. The role of operational thinking in children's comprehension and appreciation of humor. Child Development, 1971b, 42, 733-744.

McGhee, P. E. The development of the humor response: A review of the literature. Psychological Bulletin, 1971c, 76(5), 328-348.

McGhee, P. E. Methodological and theoretical considerations for cross-cultural investigation of children's humor. International Journal of Psychology, 1972, 7(1) 13-21.

McGhee, P. E. Development of children's ability to create the joking relationship. Child Development, 1974, 45(2), 552-556.

Mead, G.H. Self. In A. Straus (Ed.), On social psychology: Selected papers. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956.

Merleau-Ponty, M. The structure of behavior. Boston: Beacon Press, 1963. (trans. A.L. Fisher, orig. 1942)

Opie, P. & Opie, I. The lore and language of school children. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959.

Obrdlik, A. J. Gallows humor: A sociological phenomenon. American Journal of Sociology, 1942, 47, 709-716.

Piaget, J. The construction of reality. New York: Macmillan, 1955a.

Piaget, J. The moral judgement of the child. New York: Norton, 1955b.

Piddington, R. *The psychology of laughter: A study in social adaptation*. London: Figurehead, 1933.

Rapp, A. A phylogenetic theory of wit and humor. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 1949, *30*, 81-96.

Rapp, A. *The origins of wit and humor*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co. Inc., 1951.

Redlich, F. C., Levine, J., & Sohler, T. P. A mirth response test: Preliminary report on a psychodiagnostic technique utilizing dynamics of humor. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 1951, *21*, 717-734.

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. On joking relationships. *Africa*, 1940, *13*, 195-210.

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. A further note on joking relationships. *Africa*, 1949, *19*, 133-140.

Riegel, K. F. From traits and equilibrium toward developmental dialectics. In W. J. Arnold (Ed.), *Nebraska symposium on motivation, 1975: Conceptual foundations of psychology*. 23. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1976a.

Riegel, K. F. *Psychology of development and history*. New York: Plenum Press, 1976b.

Riegel, K. F. *Psychology, mon amour: A counter-text*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1978.

Roberts, J. M., Sutton-Smith, B., & Kendon, A. Strategy in folk-tales and games. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 1963, *61*, 185-199.

Roberts, J. M., & Sutton-Smith, B. Cross-cultural correlates of games of chance. *Behavioral Science Notes*, 1966, *3*, 131-144.

Sartre, J. P. *The search for a method*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1968. (Trans. H. Barnes)

Schmidt, W. H. O. Child development: The human, cultural and educational context. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.

Schachtel, E. G. Metamorphosis. New York: Basic Books, 1959.

Shultz, T. R. The role of incongruity and resolution in children's appreciation of cartoon humor. Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 1972, 13, 456-477.

Shultz, T. R., & Pilon, R. Development of the ability to detect linguistic ambiguity. Child Development, 1973, 44, 728-733.

Shultz, T. R., & Horibe, F. Development of the appreciation of verbal jokes. Developmental Psychology, 1974, 10(1), 13-20.

Shultz, T. R. Development of the appreciation of riddles. Child Development, 1974, 45, 100-105.

Stephenson, R. M. Conflict and control functions of humor. American Journal of Sociology, 1951, 56, 569-574.

Strickland, J. F. The effect of motivation arousal on humor preferences. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1959, 59, 278-281.

Sully, J. An essay on laughter. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907.

Sutton-Smith, B. A developmental structural account of riddles. Paper delivered at Society for Research and Child Development, Philadelphia, March 1973.

Taylor, A. English riddles from the oral tradition. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951.

Wells, R. E. A study of tastes in humorous literature among pupils of junior and senior high schools. Journal of Educational Research, 1937, 28, 81-91.

Weisstein, N. Why we aren't laughing... anymore. Ms., October 1973.

White, R. W. Motivation reconsidered: The concept of competence. *Psychological Review*, 1959, *66*(2), 297-333.

Williams, J. M. An experimental and theoretical study of humor in children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1946, *16*, 43-44.

Wolfenstein, M. Children's understanding of jokes. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 1953, *8*, 162-173.

Wolfenstein, M. *Children's humor: A psychological analysis*. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1954.

Zigler, E., Levine, J., & Gould, L. Cognitive processes in the development of children's appreciation of humor. *Child Development*, 1966a, *37*, 507-518.

Zigler, E., Levine, J., & Gould, L. The humor response of normal, institutionalized retarded and noninstitutionalized retarded children. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, 1966b, *71*(3), 472-480.

Zigler, E., Levine, J., & Gould, L. Cognitive challenges as a factor in children's humor appreciation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1967, *6*(3), 332-336.

Zigderveld, A. C. Jokes and their relation to social reality. *Social Research*, 1968, *35*, 286-311.